ナナメ屋

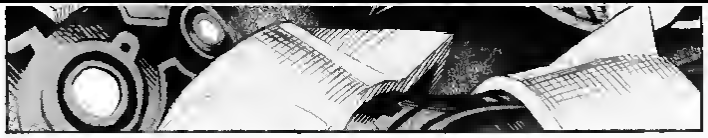
spinning web

3

篠房六郎

Shinofusa Rokurou

Chapter 10 - Lying Wolf #7



Admirably done.
As always.
What?
It has been a while, hasn't it?
Now now now now
We can talk about personal issues and mistakes at a later time
You've got some nerve coming back to me...
I've come here as a scout
I've been hearing some things about you on the grapevine
I figured
you were bored to tears and filled with self-loathing again

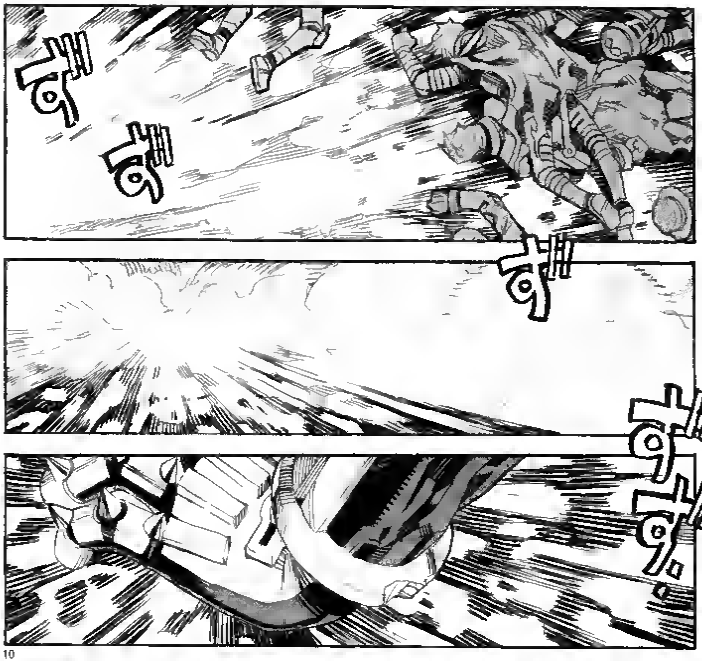
Ho, now.
I see you still have enough feeling left to move.
And the glint in your eyes tells me your drive to act has not entirely dried up
5
Will you slaughter my avatar now?
It would be very easy for you to do
In your current state annihilating enemies is the only course of action you are built to do
And I can provide you with the enemies that will draw out that ability in you to it's greatest extent

If you truly want someone to kill you
I can do my very utmost to make it happen
I might even be able to take that pent-up rage and desperation inside you, and turn it towards something better
6
What?
You talk like a counselor
I've been helping out with a special seminar's experimental therapy method.
Yes.
that would be correct
As you can see, it's rubbed off on me
A pack of hundreds of well-trained PCs
Not like these mounds of auto-generated mobs
other "wasted" lives spent gaining the skills necessary to defeat you As many of them as you desire

Your self-loathing is quite easy to understand
Your character is created so that it is useless unless your health is under a certain amount
In other words, for you to continue fighting here,
you must be continually damaged and backed into a corner
And you know
it is nothing more than simple deceit
In reality... all you are doing is sitting in a chair...
You are not actually being ground into nothing
Am I wrong?
And no matter how hard you try to be destroyed when your health lowers to one digit, your engine starts
Like the emotions you keep trapped within yourself you contain a nearly unimaginable strength...
In fact too much of both
Shall I tell you a way to properly sublimate this?
It's very simple
very easy...

It can be even the smallest little thing
Just use your strength
For someone else's sake
Now, if I have at all piqued your interest
then perhaps
you would like to hear about some work I have for you

I might have killed him
I don't know
Where'd he go?
A smoke-screen!
...shit
Did he use this?
The big guy.
but with his health at the time, it could have been enough
I know it would have done only a tiny bit of damage,
One of my arrows just barely hit him.
What?
You're kidding.
Just look for signs of him, and alert everyone if you see him
With this number of people, it'll only turn into a Friendly Fire shootout That's what he wants
Fire around a bit?
What should we do?
Got it?
ドドドド



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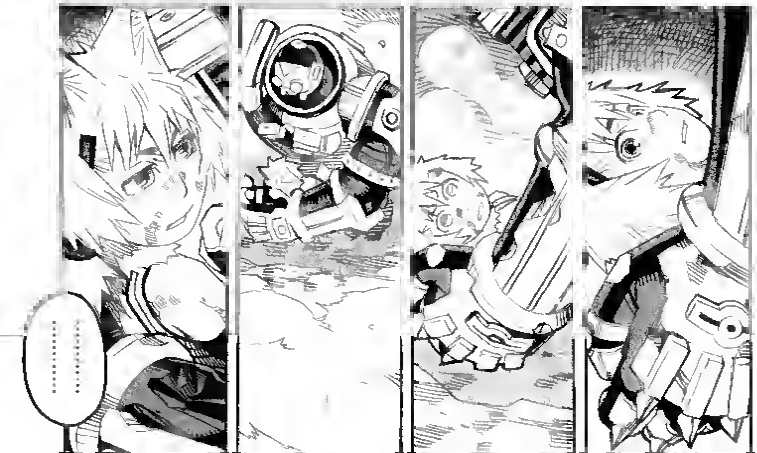
I'll keep you safe


……

Switch off your voice track
Huh?
(engine rumbling)
What the?!
What's that noise?
It's him!
It's coming from over there!
Aim and Fire!

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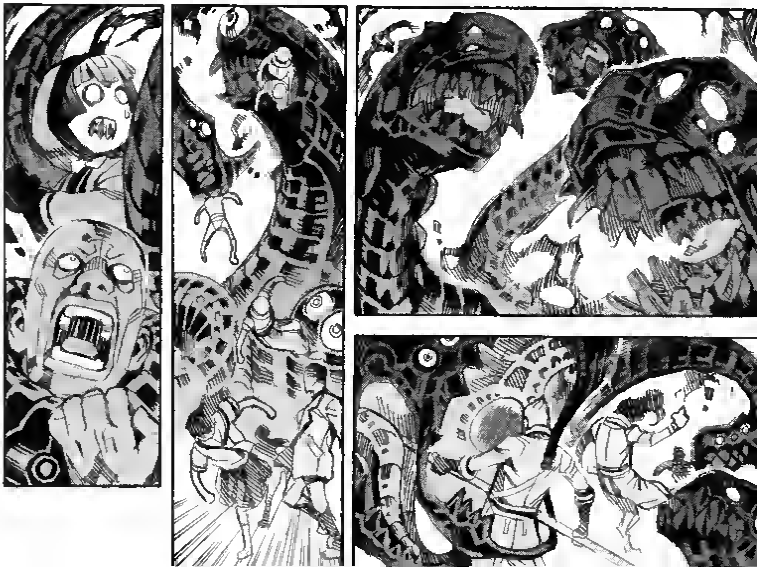
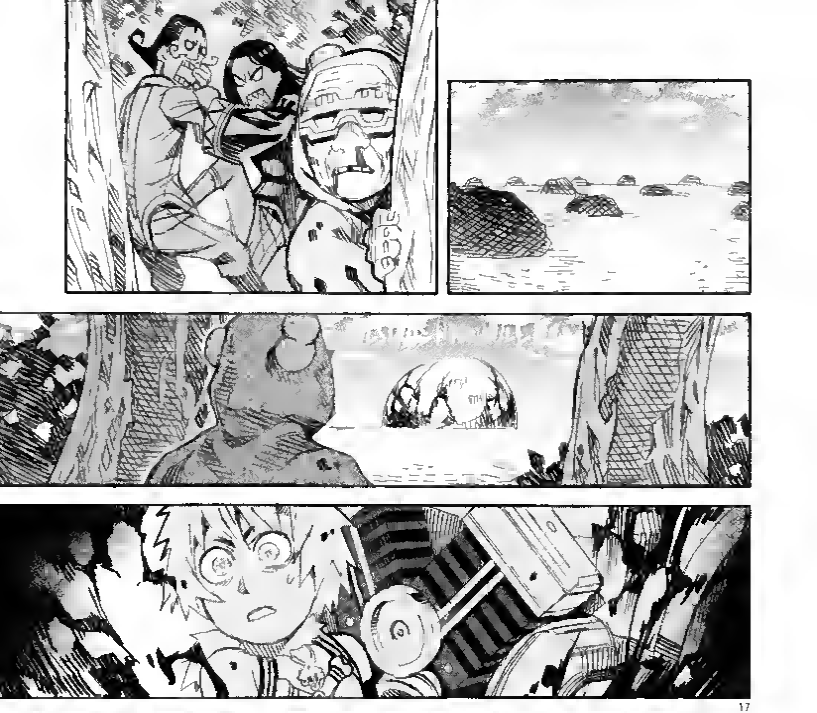
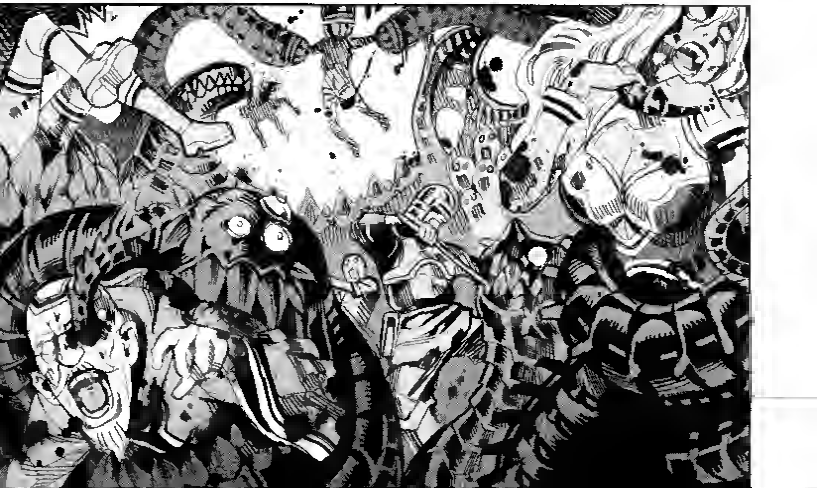
ギリ…

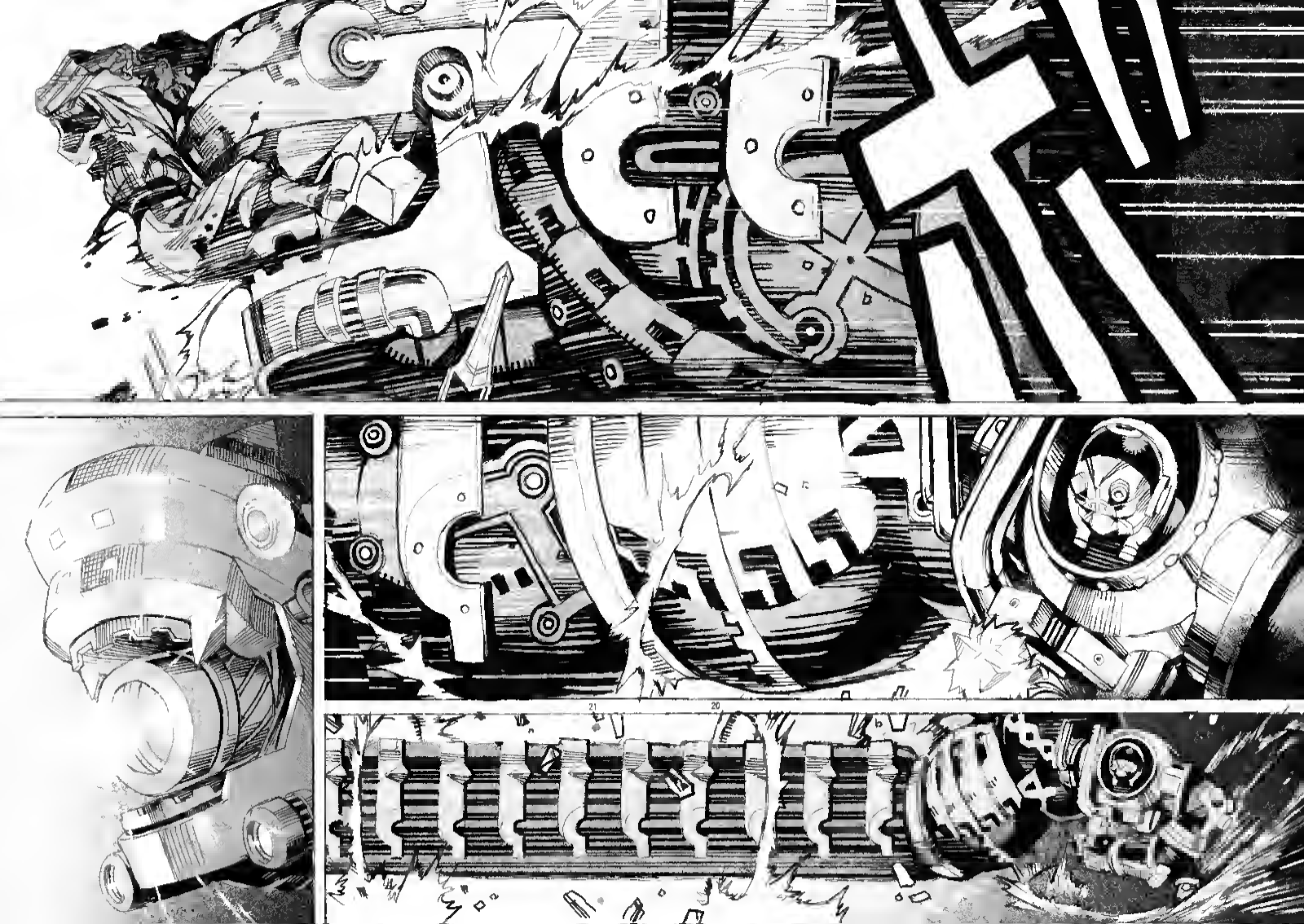
ドルンドルンドルン
ドルンドルン
ドルン

!?
A summoning circle?!
I've never seen one this big...
Neither have I!
Is this his work?
He's not a summoner though!
15
I've never seen this circle before, but I can tell you this!
Any summon of this type is gonna suck up anyone caught in it!
!?
What's wrong with you?
Crap, we gotta get outta here!







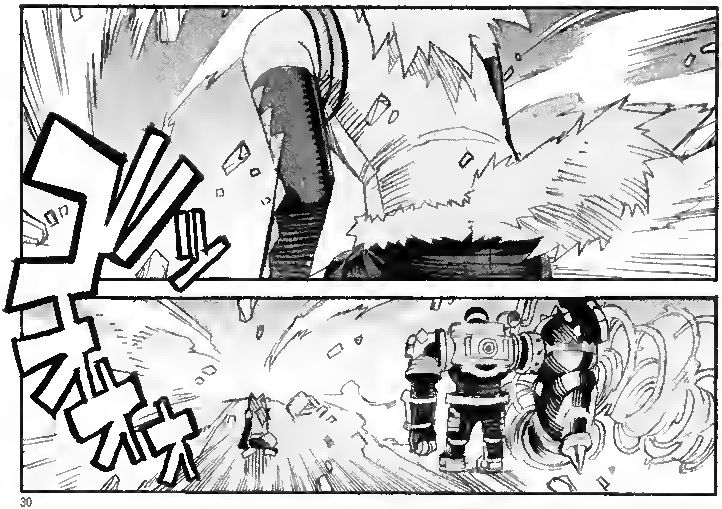


You went out on your own again and stole this from outsiders
What if the other kids start copying you?
Well I
What is the meaning of this?
Hmm?
Why don't you understand?
God, it must be tragic to be you
It's bad enough that you might agitate the people wandering around out there!
Why do we always have to tiptoe around and worry about pissing them off?
What?
Why?

Okay, so I admit, there are tons of them,
so many you could never get rid of them all
And if you tried to fight them head-on, you'd never stand a chance of winning
Well, how about that?
You do understand
My point is,
how can you be so happy with this?!
We're powerless, we're helpless
I'm not being happy with it, I'm being calm and collected
I've got a plan to wipe them out
Huh?
Which is why you should stop your squallin
and just leave it all up to me
And you act like this is perfectly okay!
You're being pathetic, Gramma!!
You're lying
.....

You're lying
You must be
No I'm not
Just shut up and believe in me
It doesn't matter how many of those little runts get together,
I've got an ace up my sleeve that'll clean 'em all up at once

I HATE YOU I HATE YOU!
I HATE YOU YOU STUPID, LYING OLD BITCH!!
When are you going to give the jokes a rest?!
All you ever say are stupid lies, stupid bullshit to get you out of a tight spot! Always, always, always!
You can't expect me to just believe you this time!
I hate you Grandma
I hate you.
23
28
Hey, I might just end up saving your ass
Why don't you trust me this time?
You're not even trying to sell it anymore!
This is what I mean!
you're just making it up
It always turns out
I can't believe that
Never
And you never even think about what that does to me everytime you spout some new lie...



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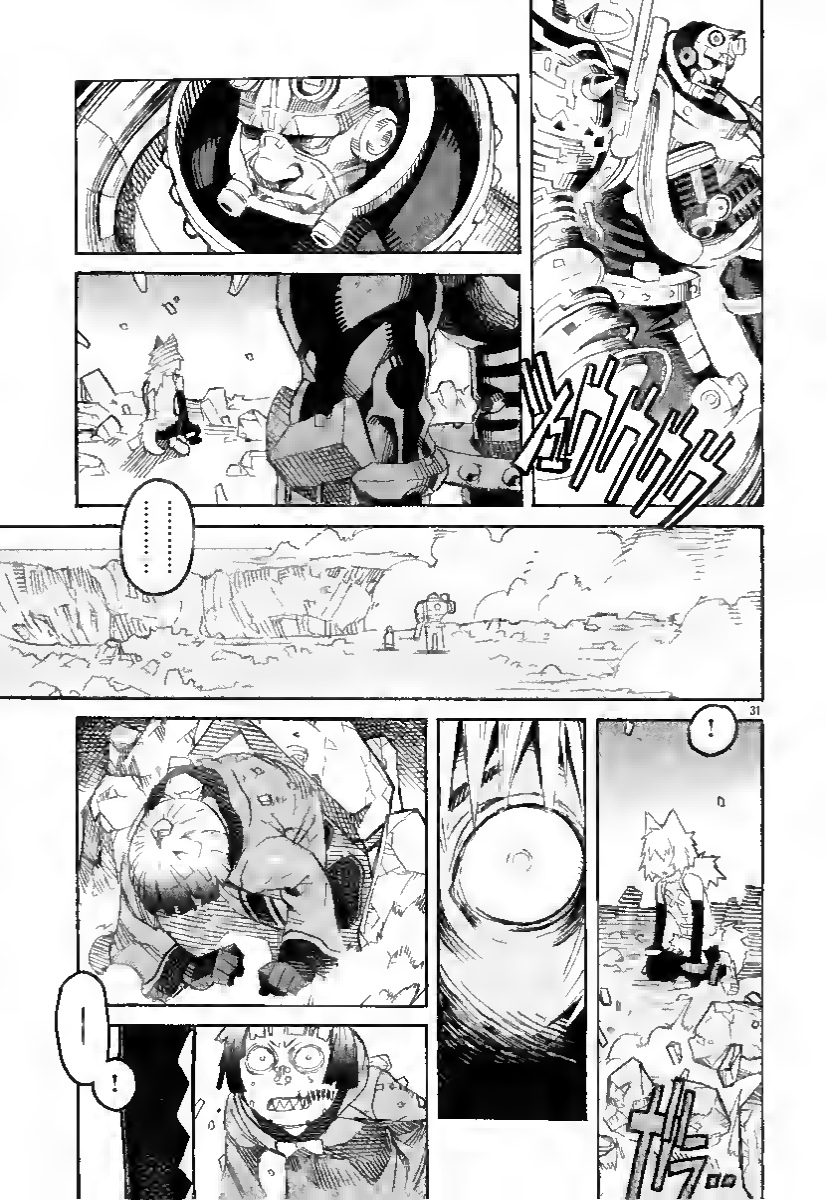
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!
ガラ……
!

ガッ
ゴッ

Why are you still alive?!
When Grandma's already gone!
Why,
Agh

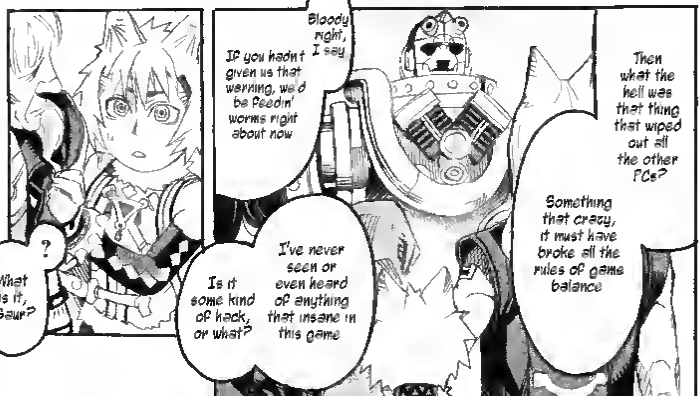
They died!
Everyone died!
Why?!
Why is only the worst, most unredeemable one of all, left alive?!
33
.....
Grandma
I'm sorry
Oh dear
Look at us getting all weepy and sniffly
Why do I have to...
Why do...
Shut up!
Be silent!
Why don't you give it a rest?
Skeesh
Why do I have to put up with...
Why do,
Why do I,

It just doesn't suit you, now does it?
Not that there's anything wrong with it once in a while
Hmm?

I only wanted to go and teach that stupid little pup a lesson she wouldn't forget.
I can't exactly do that right this moment.
I just–
We kep' tryin' a stop her from jumpin into Pray, but the dame wouldn't listen.
Silence, Sancho
Well, this is actually punishment from our dear sister for earlier
By the looks of it, you've had a rough time, too
I'm glad you're all right

Besides, we only came in the first place to kick that dumb pup's grandma's ass, so what's the big surprise?!
!!
I mean, we could have easily managed with Katsutoshi's throwing knives in that situation, but nooo.
Teach her a lesson?
Why?
They were stupid! They ran into battle and nearly got killed because they didn't know what they were doing!
Be-cause!
I'm not getting mad, I'm just stating the truth! That was the original objective!
Umm, I-
Hmm? Can't you?!
And plus, can't you dodge just one measly slow-ass axe attack?
For shame!
Oh you can't flatter me like that
Huh?
Um
At least you don't seem to be bad people
..well, uhh
Oh, givit a rest, mate
Whadda happy endinkkk!!
She was reunited wif her grammaaaa!
!

Can we talk?
Hmm?
!
Aren't you-?
It looks like a buncha stuff happened while I took a crap and a shower and all that
I'd, uh, appreciate it if you filled me in
I see
Coincidence can be a bitch
So you were our bodyguard this entire time, the one that Chlos hired


Then what the hell was that thing that wiped out all the other PCs?
Bloody right, I say
If you hadn't given us that warning, we'd be feedin' worms right about now
Something that crazy, it must have broke all the rules of game balance
I've never seen or even heard of anything that insane in this game
Is it some kind of hack, or what?
What is it, Gaur?
?

Wait a minute, Grandma
Isn't this the guy that you were telling me about before?
The ace-up-your-sleeve assassin?
.....
Huh?
Then,
wozzat I'm hearin'?
What's what?
You don't hear that noise...?
I stopped crying And already shut up.
'ey.
Pipe down the squallin'.
Like a baby screamin'.

篠房六郎
Shinofusa Rokurou

ナツノヤモ
Spinning Zoo

3

篠房六郎

ナツノヤモ 3
Spinning Zoo

IKKI COMIX
小学館
IKKI 483

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雑誌 45904-83 小学館
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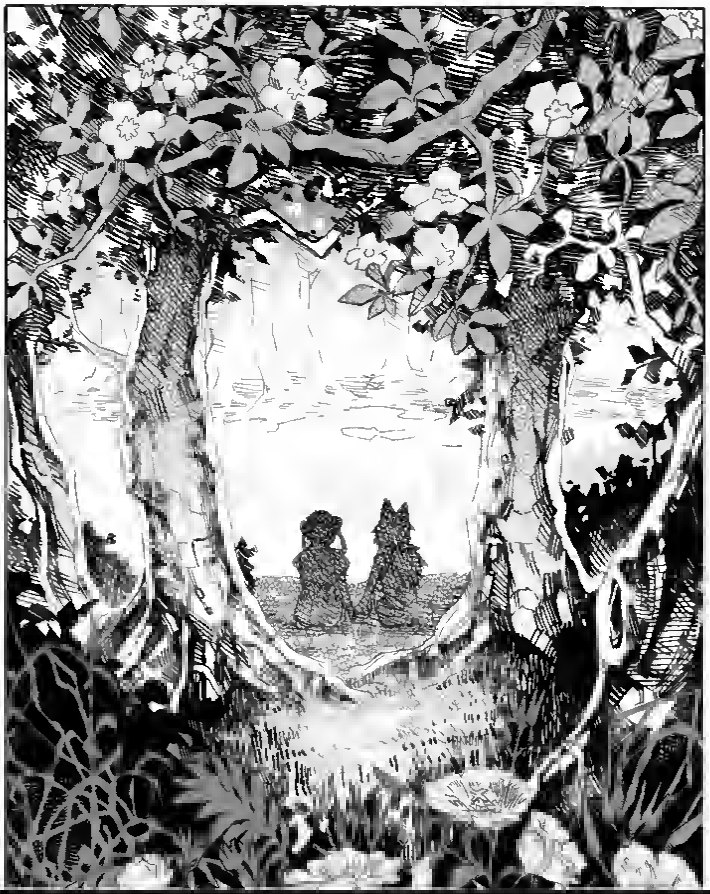
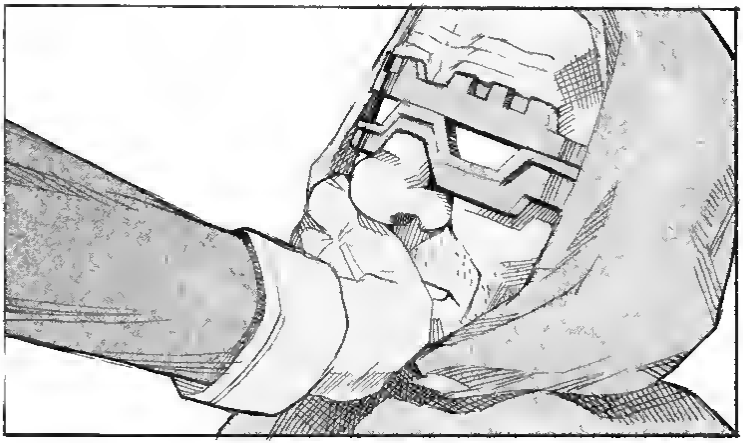
On his way to the place known as the "Zoo," the incredibly powerful player "Engine Man" is dragged into a massive battle. A guild that sees the Zoo as enemies, and the appearance of the monster Kabaki believed only to be a rumor. Can the Engine Man protect his charges?!



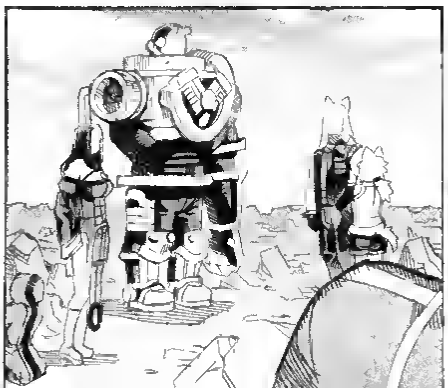
Chapter 11 - Lying Wolf #8



Why's 'at?
Wouldn't it be better te tell
Good. We'll just keep quiet about that
No.
Don't hear it no more
Look over there
At her

Do you hear a baby crying with your skill of Farhearing?
Still?
Wozzat for, then?

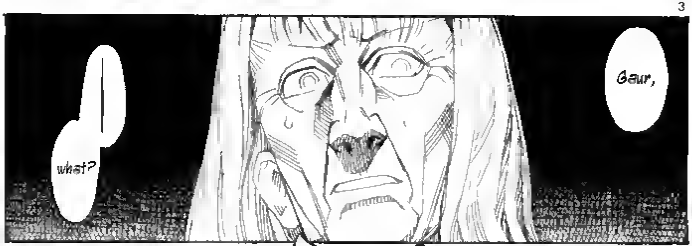
2



Her?
You mean-

What if it sets her off and she goes crazy again?
All I'm saying is, let's keep quiet until we know exactly what's going on
Well, ya got a mighty fine point there

3


Gaur,
what?

I mean that there
Use Foreseeing
Alright, you gotta remember issa fictional world, so fantastic stuff like ghosts 'n monsters are totally natural-
What in the hell is wrong with you two? Chill out!!
Nononononono Big Sis, it's nothing! Just teeeake it eeeasy!
!
!?
Hang on a sec!
Haven't you noticed-
that?

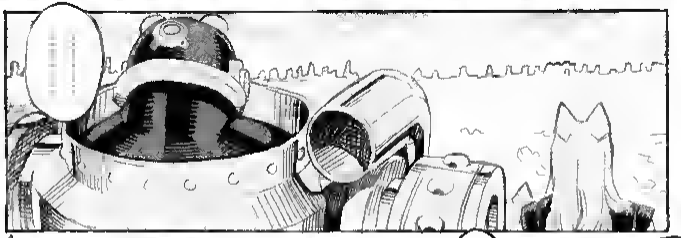
!

They're all focused on this spot, recording footage.
The images of you people, involved with the Zoo.
You've killed too many PCs here today.

You're done for now
Game over

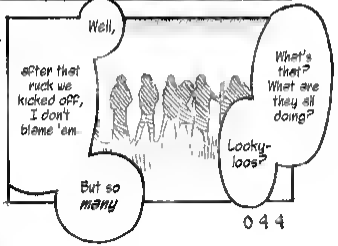
5

How many people do you think will find out
Because of all the noise you just made,
the murdering beast-people are still logging in to this place?
What?



4

Heh
Hehch
There's no end to them!
If this turns out like the last one—


Well,
after that ruck we kicked off, I don't blame 'em.
But so many
What's that? What are they all doing?
Looky-loos?

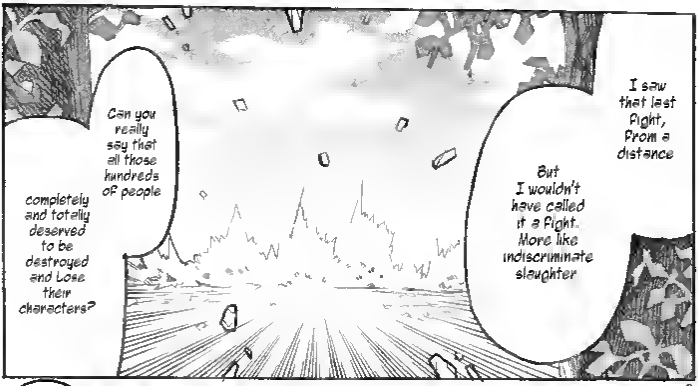
There will be hundreds of PCs chasing you now, at all times
The real hunt begins now.
You will not escape.
You've crossed a line which can never be uncrossed.
Don't you see?
And they will delete you from this world, mark my word

6

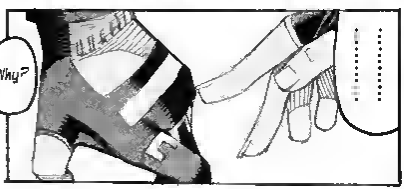
I hate to ask this now, of all times,
but who the hell are you people?
Uh,
Hem.
We'll have to torture her
Tritn prithoner weild's a sharp tongue, she doeth!
What?
Here's the short of it
We're total strangers passing through
Well,
it'll be a long story, y'see.
What, is my singin' that bad?
!?
Go on Sancho, sing right in her ears!

Crank
How's it look?
Well, after the display of strength you just put on,
I'll bet they won't be too eager to approach just yet
It just means that not every person you find online is your enemy
Have no fear
We just saved you guys because we felt like it.
Don't listen to him
You folks
.....
7
I think it would be advantageous to take this opportunity to have everyone logout
But if you move from that location, you can count on someone following you.
Do you know,
how many PCs were just destroyed and lost here?
Gaur.
Huh?

Oh, that's right
You didn't see it, did you?
Man, he's really incredible
Nobody can stop us now
With this power, we can fight anyone, head-on
Gaur
listen to me
Incred-ible?
How?
I mean, he was just crushing people like scraps of paper
Hundreds, in an instant
What?
Huh?
Haven't you learned anything from them?
Some people will understand if you just talk things out
How many hundreds of PCs were just killed?
And do you understand what that means?
That's why I'm asking you now

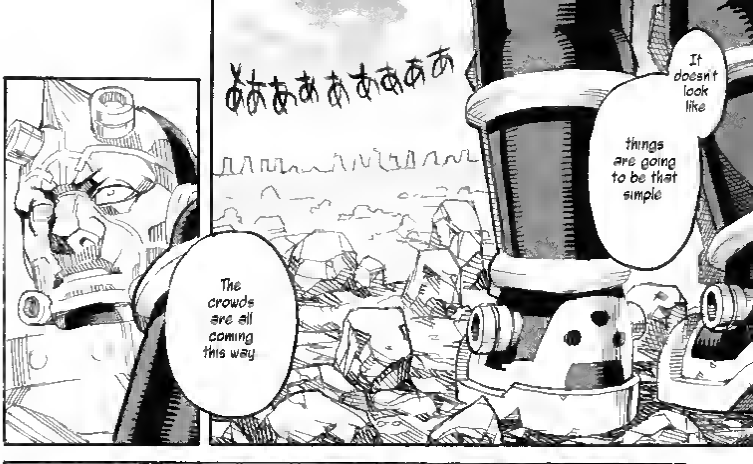

I saw that last fight, from a distance
But I wouldn't have called it a fight. More like indiscriminate slaughter
Can you really say that all those hundreds of people completely and totally deserved to be destroyed and lose their characters?

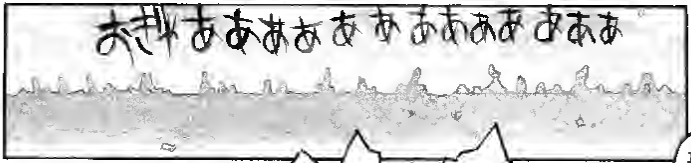
Maybe this little patchwork rag doll here is right
Maybe we *have* done something that can never be taken back...


Why?
.....

Why do you say that?
They were our enemies!
I see you still haven't gotten rid of your bad habit of making snap judgments like that!
Like who your enemies are and aren't!
If you just keep fighting, it will never end!
You have to get over this idea that you can't survive without enemies to fight!
What's with this pacifism all of a sudden?!
Before you said you'd kill everyone with the ace up your sleeve!
Because once the card has been used, you're only going to get carried away, that's why!!
Just like now!
So what's your secret weapon, anyway?
Figures it's just another stupid lie!
Looks like they're arguing
Can you hear what they're saying?
No, they're a bit too far for ear-hearing
Hang on
Don't you hear something weird, a bit closer?

...see what, I mean!
Even if you have it, you mustn't use it,
Geur
The kind of power that lets you kill others
What, you can't hear it?
Something weird?
Like what?
あぁぁぁぁぁぁ
It sounds like a baby crying
After all,
it was you who...
You should understand that better than anyone
!
あぁ あぁぁ
What is it?
If the argument is over, have everyone logout and
No.
あぁぁ
あぁ
Hm?


It doesn't look like things are going to be that simple
The crowds are all coming this way



Is that voice what I—?
It ain't! It ain't us!
That'th right. Bethides, it wasn't us playing a trick earlier either!
Huh?
Right It was actually them two...

What's wrong?
What's with that look on your faces?
Everyone get behind me, and start running
What?
Wait a minute
Summat's wrong
I'll move forward and buy some time, like before
They're coming this way
What is?
If they was attackin'
they'd be doin' that
They ain't usin' long-range attacks again
You cast that spell of displacement
13
Something's wrong
with those silhouettes
no
wait

..wh-
What the-?!
15
14
!!?
!
054

!?
What is that?!
Issa virus!
Whatever you do, don't touch it!!
I don't think they's runnin' at us!
I think they's runnin' away from summat
The crying is getting louder and louder!!
What the hell is going on here?!

Whatever's making that crying noise.
And we can't even see anything!
Away from something?
But what?!
!!!
!
...damn
I can't connect at all
well, damn
In that state, it's already impossible to contact
17

There's no way
to stop the kid now.

Huh?
Tell me a story
Ger...
I want to hear a story you made up

That's not true.
I always have lots of fun talking with you, Gar
Even if I could, you wouldn't enjoy it.
Oh, no way.
I can't make one up.
A story
From me?
Yeah.
Anyways.
Did I say something weird?
Aww shucks.
You're just saying that.
I don't think I should do it,
after all.
I bet any story I make up
would have everybody die,
at the end

Don't split up! Everyone, stay in one spot
The moon is red!
What the hell?

!?
21
an' the red color's a warning sign the Board's being illegally modified!
That moon's a sign o' the Game Master updatin' the Board setting.
You think?!
What?!
Some kinna land reconfiguration!
W-w-w-w-wh...
What's all this?!
I think!
how else do ya explain this crazy abnormal eating?!
If it ain't,
this Board is being cracked right now?!
Which means what,

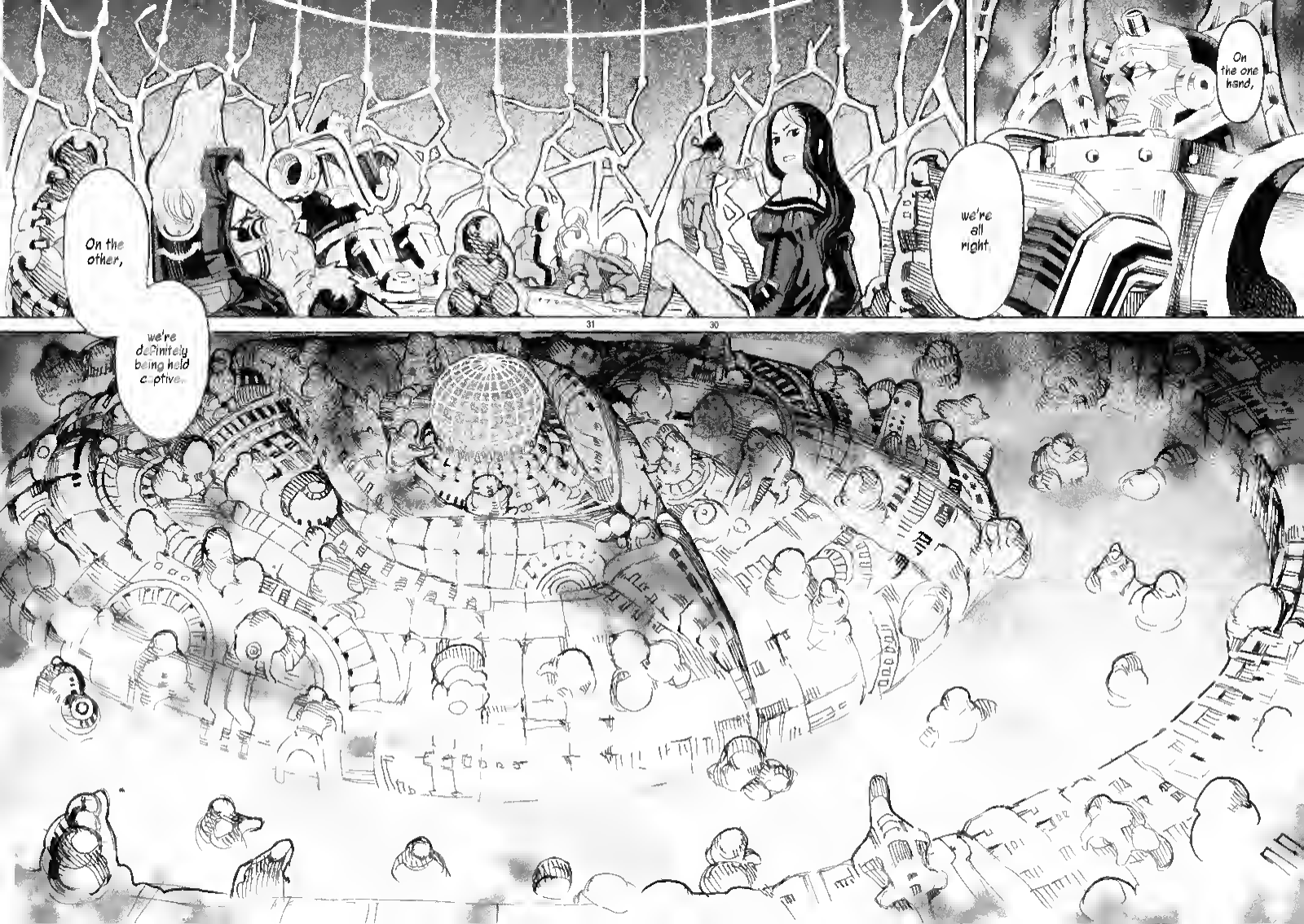
I just saw a little crater form, right now
What's that?
!?
Whoa,
whoa, whoa!

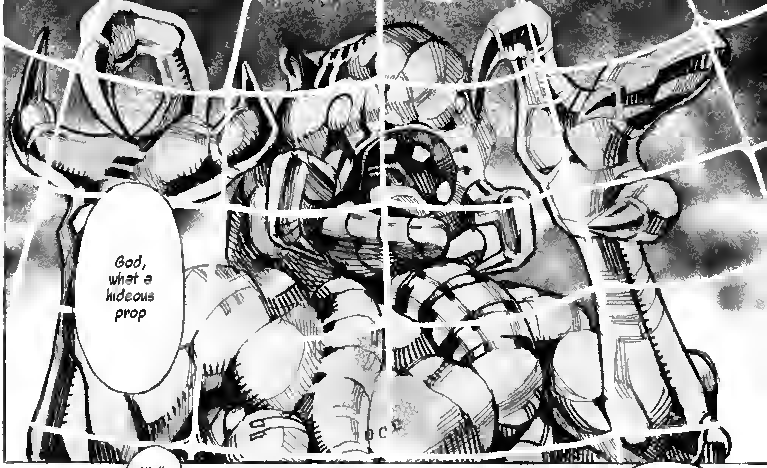
Something's coming, something's coming, something's coming!
I can't see it, but it's coming!
Let's bloody Boot it, then!
Hurry you louts!
Xij..
ドゴ
(kekekekekekekeke)
Oh God, oh God, oh God!
A textbook example of being trapped like rats, this is!
What are you laughing about?!
Have you gone mad?
Umm
Kabaki...
Was it?

Huh?
What?
Remember?
That creature from the story you told me
What, Gar?
You remember that?
I was gonna make it the name of the main character.
That was the one
that starts eating you from the inside right?
It's the one that hatches from an egg and stays with its mother for a bit
and then
...and then,
it eats her.

ナオオ

From what I see, about 1/8 of the board has been altered
The horizon is entirely red
I'm seeing all the symptoms of a board being cracked
Update?
This board was cracked soon after the GM's real life murders were made public,
but seeing as that time the entire board was reset and all PCs destroyed,
and the fact that I'm still here talking to you now,
means that we can't say for sure this is the work of the same cracker
Oh,
I'm just listening to valuable details from a survivor down there
Crank,
what are you talking about?
He could have learned how to hold back, or perhaps there's some reason why the effect is lessened.
What do you think?
If it really is the same guy
I can't imagine what that might be at this time
So,
what's happening?
Over there right now


On the other,
we're definitely being held captive.
we're all right.
On the one hand,

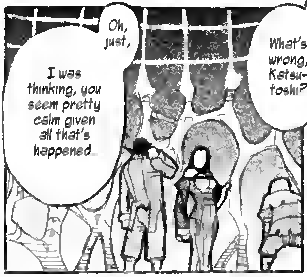

God, what a hideous prop

Well,
Crackin's a business for tasteless blokes wit' no money
Not that I have the money
IF I was the GM I'd make stuff with actual taste

32

Well I mean,
this is obviously the work of some idiotic cracker, right?
It's not some ghost or curse or anything
Why should I be all freaked out over this?

.....

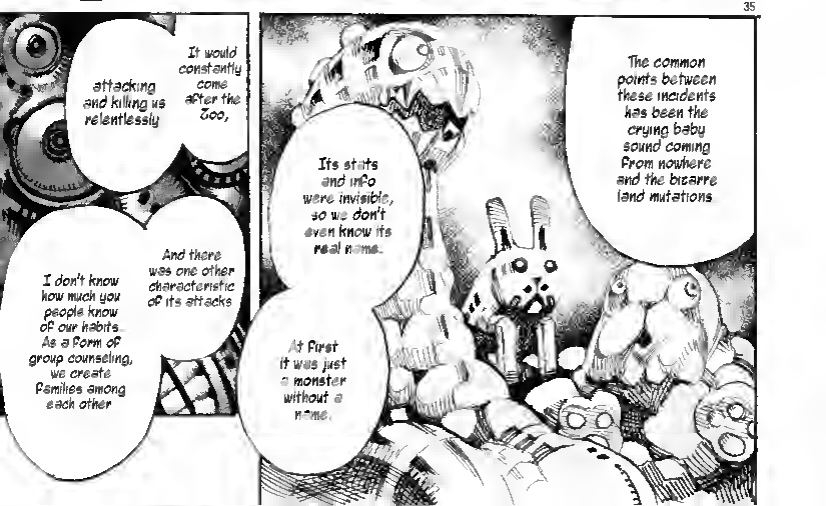

Huh?
What's wrong, Katsu-toshi?
Oh, just,
I was thinking, you seem pretty calm given all that's happened...

I'd say ask them two over there.
But if you want the real dirt,
and kill their terrible parents
it was souls of abused, murdered children that gather together
I think
By the way, you'll have to remind me,
what's the story on Kabaki?
You two, are you okay?
What's wrong, Poochie?
Are you feeling sick?

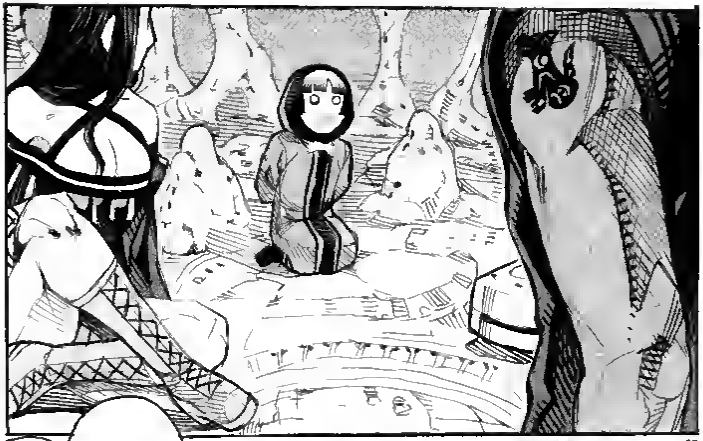
It's nothing serious
Give her a few minutes,
She's just a little overworked after all that's happened
and she'll settle down and come to her senses
Anyways,
Ma'am-
Yeah, I heard you
You want to know about Kabaki
But,
it's only as much as I know
I'll tell you the truth.

I don't really know exactly what. It'd be hard to explain.
Anyways, it was something about some kids, where it ends up with parents being killed
A story?
What kind?
It actually started off as the name of a character in a story this little one made up
The word "Kabaki"

And it was after she finished the story,
that an unidentified cracker began attacking the board
And this is the one that totally destroyed the board,
That's probably the only time you folks know about
But the first time was actually before even that
before?


The common points between these incidents has been the crying baby sound coming from nowhere and the bizarre land mutations
Its stats and info were invisible, so we don't even know its real name.
At first it was just a monster without a name.
It would constantly come after the Zoo,
attacking and killing us relentlessly
And there was one other characteristic of its attacks
I don't know how much you people know of our habits. As a form of group counseling, we create families among each other

It would only target the players acting as parents, killing them, patiently torturing them until their characters were lost
And after some time, we all started taking the name from Gaur's story,
and calling the monster Kabaki.
I think it was extremely confusing and conflicting for her
It was like
truth that came out of a lie
36
I was the one who started leaking bits of the story to the outside
I figured it would be a good way to scare off the people who come here looking for kicks
A very fascinating story indeed
I see
You're enjoying this, aren't you?
It's had incredible effect that way
True,
Say any more, and I'll go mad for a totally different reason this time
That's a lie
That's all that I can tell you
I don't know any more than-



What, you're still alive?
It's too bad you didn't die instead
I was thinking about that myself
Why didn't I die then?

The old bitch is lying to you all
Lying to you,
and hiding something important

All those hundreds of players present were infected with viruses, destroyed, and melded into the landscape.
So why are we alive in here?
Why were we spared th-t treatment?
Don't you find it curious?

and this cracker limited his attacks to not harm the Zoo members
so [redacted] dodged the axe through close proximity alone
The most likely answer for this that I can come up with
is that we're only safe because we were in the vicinity of these two people from the Zoo.

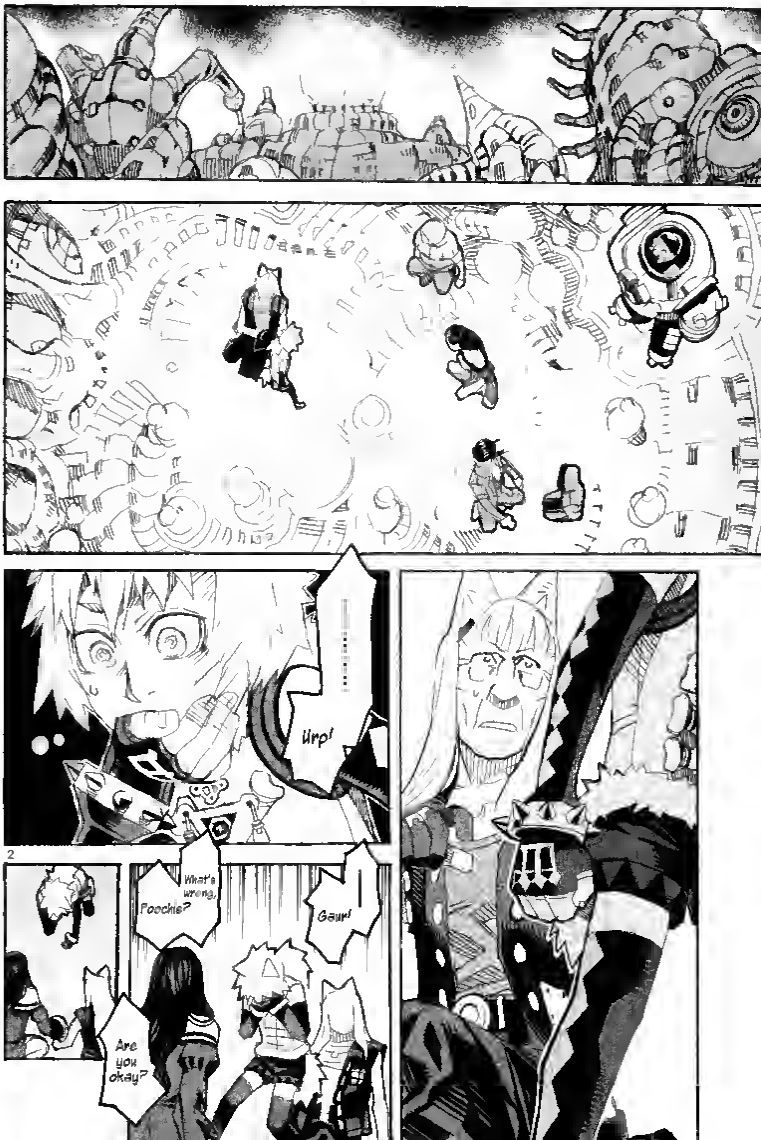
It's the only explanation
These two and this Kabeki cracker must be working together, somehow

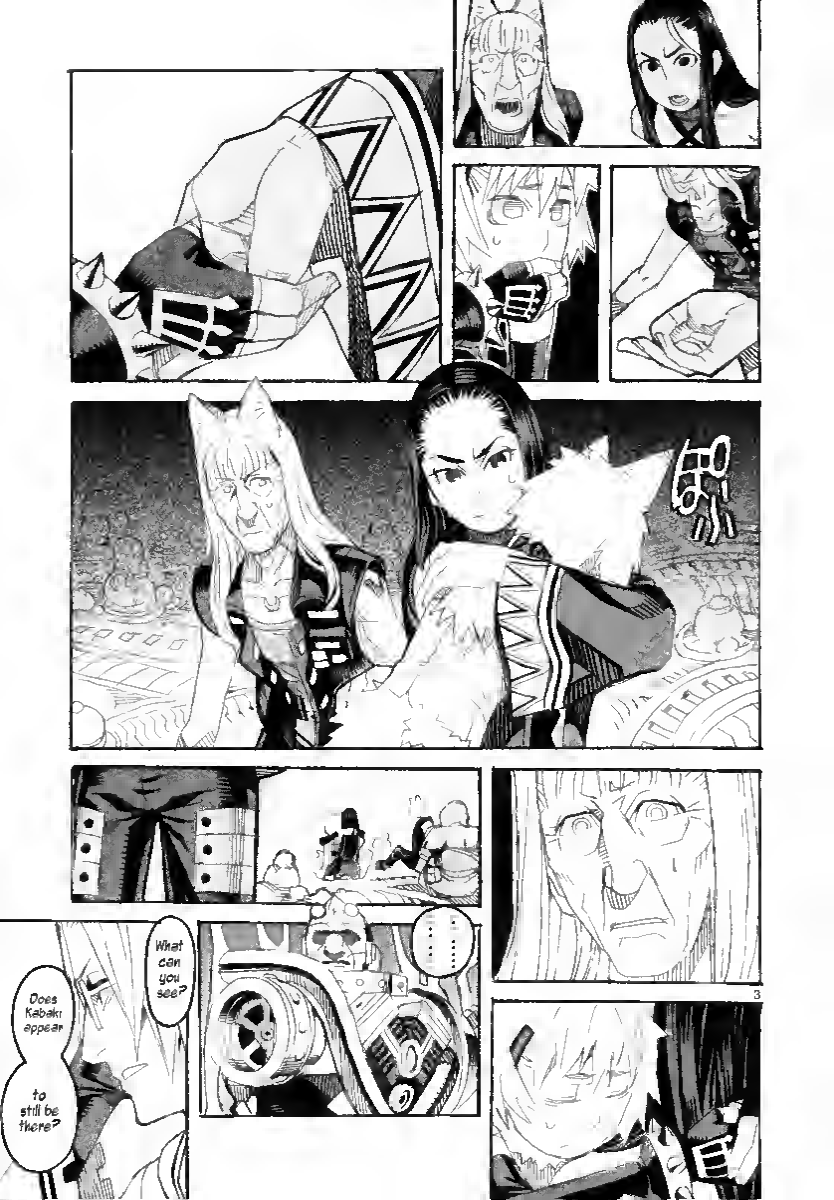
And that includes you too, lest you forget!
Oops, did I get that wrong?
So Kabeki's in cahoots with you people instead?
Shut your piehole, you little wretch!
Why would I kill those other PCs?
They would have saved my ass
Either way, you can see how the present situation doesn't make sense unless one of us is aligned with him
Why you-

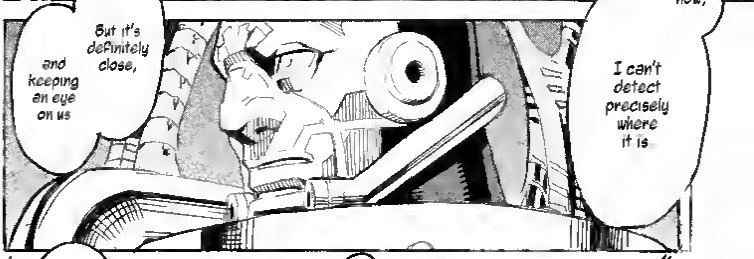
This old bag told me earlier,
that Kabaki is their guardian spirit
It's not a very funny joke
Plus, I saw something rather odd
She was frantically trying to get in contact with someone when we heard the baby crying
What about you, then?
Maybe you losing your hand in that attack is part of the act
That's a lie
Just make the old broad call Kabaki off,
and let us go free-
It'll be a piece of cake to get out of this jam
You're lying!
Lies!
36

That can't be true!
Grandma couldn't be controlling Kabaki!
That's impossible!
It's not true!
Ga-
I mean,
he was killing them!
He just...
My mom and dad, he kept.
He just kept killing them!
Over and over!
He wouldn't stop!

Chapter 12 - Lying Wolf #9


Urp!
What's wrong, Poochie?
Gaur!
Are you okay?


Does Kebaki appear to still be there?
What can you see?
.....

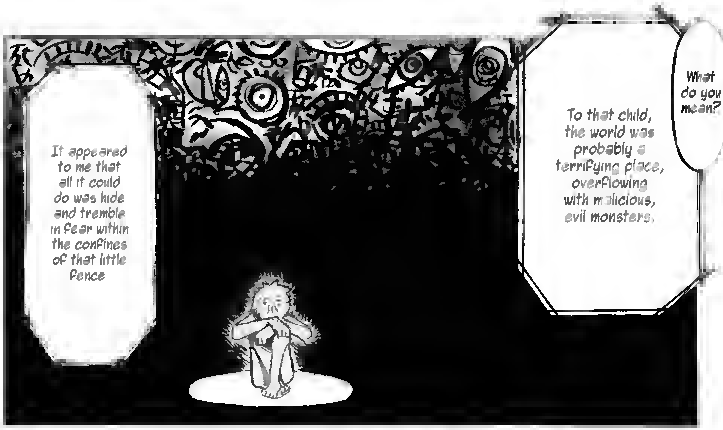

For now,
I can't detect precisely where it is
But it's definitely close,
and keeping an eye on us

4

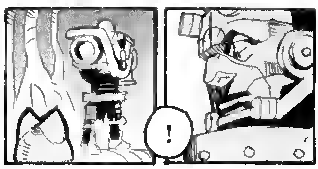
So,
what do you think?
Even with your vision linked to mine, I still can't tell those things the way you do
Is that your gut feeling again?
To digress somewhat, I once submitted a report to Dr. Hayakawa regarding garden therapy methods...
It was a report detailing the similarities between the practice of
creating a garden to express one's mental world, and the online creation of Board worlds by GMs
From your standpoint,
have you figured anything out?
Think?
About?

So,
what's your expert analysis?
If this Kebaki is using the terrain modification system to create a world that it desires,
you could say that this terrain appearance is saying something about that player's mind

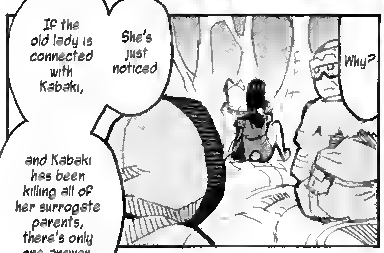
A child?
really?
It was a child that had been abused
The garden was piled high with an assortment of horrific, monstrous things
But,
My completely half-assed amateur analysis wouldn't even be worth two cents
But
what?
What?
There was also a fence
in that child's garden.
Just like these threatening fangs bared at us in our captivity right now
It's possible that this fence is not keeping you held captive,
but "protecting" you
to a garden I saw that had been created by a child
It does bear a resemblance

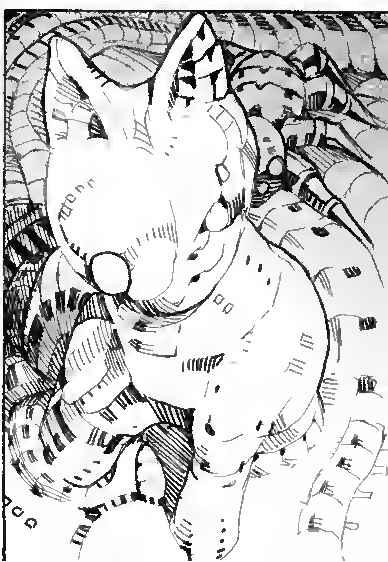

It appeared to me that all it could do was hide and tremble in fear within the confines of that little fence
To that child, the world was probably a terrifying place, overflowing with malicious, evil monsters.
What do you mean?

Are you trembling, Poochie?
What's wrong?


!

You bet she is.
Hah


If the old lady is connected with Kabaki,
She's just noticed
Why?
and Kabaki has been killing all of her surrogate parents, there's only one answer



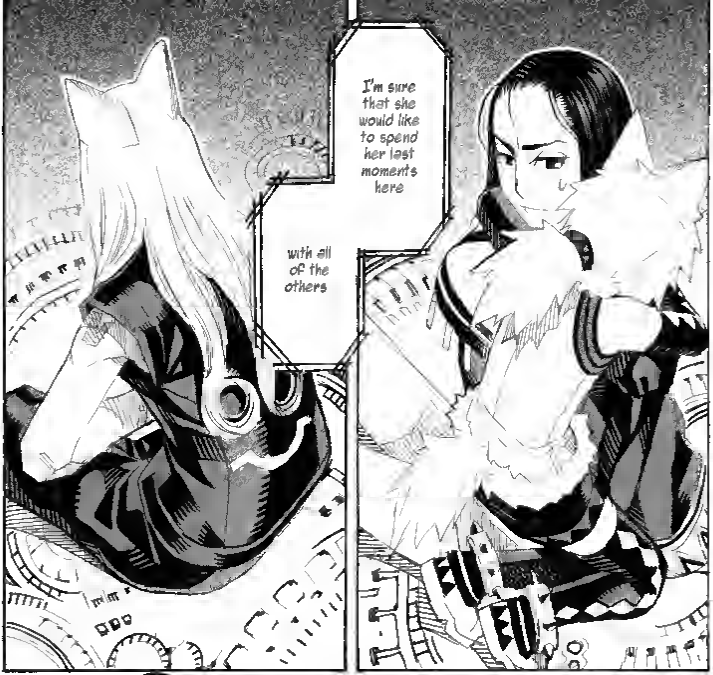
It means the old lady has been killing her parents, one by one
By secretly using Kabaki
7

……
きゅ…

What's that?
An alarm?
Uh, yes.
It means that it's 11:30 now
……
All right
Got it

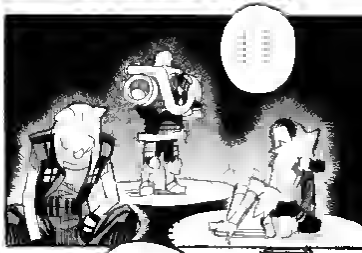
!
(clangclangclang)

Gigia,
some of the children below are worried about Kabaki appearing and Mikao not coming back
Can you go and calm them down?
Oh?
Sure
.....
What was that?
Can you tell me more?
Are you there?
What is it?
Is there any way you can bring Gaur and Mikao back to the Zoo right away?
On request from our client
Aah!
No...
Don't.
Katsuteshi Sancho
stuff a cork in this asshole
What was that alarm for, huh?
Maybe they're controlling Kabaki-
Originally, they were supposed to be having a farewell party for Mikao two hours ago,
but of course, she hasn't showed up
You heard that little alarm.
That was a time limit.
Having passed that limit means
that she must be taken to a hospital as soon as possible.

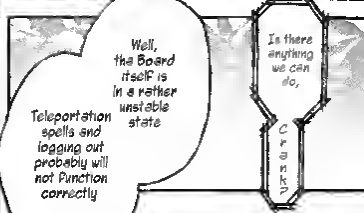

I'm sure that she would like to spend her last moments here
with all of the others
ED
ED

.....

So here's what I think
is our best shot

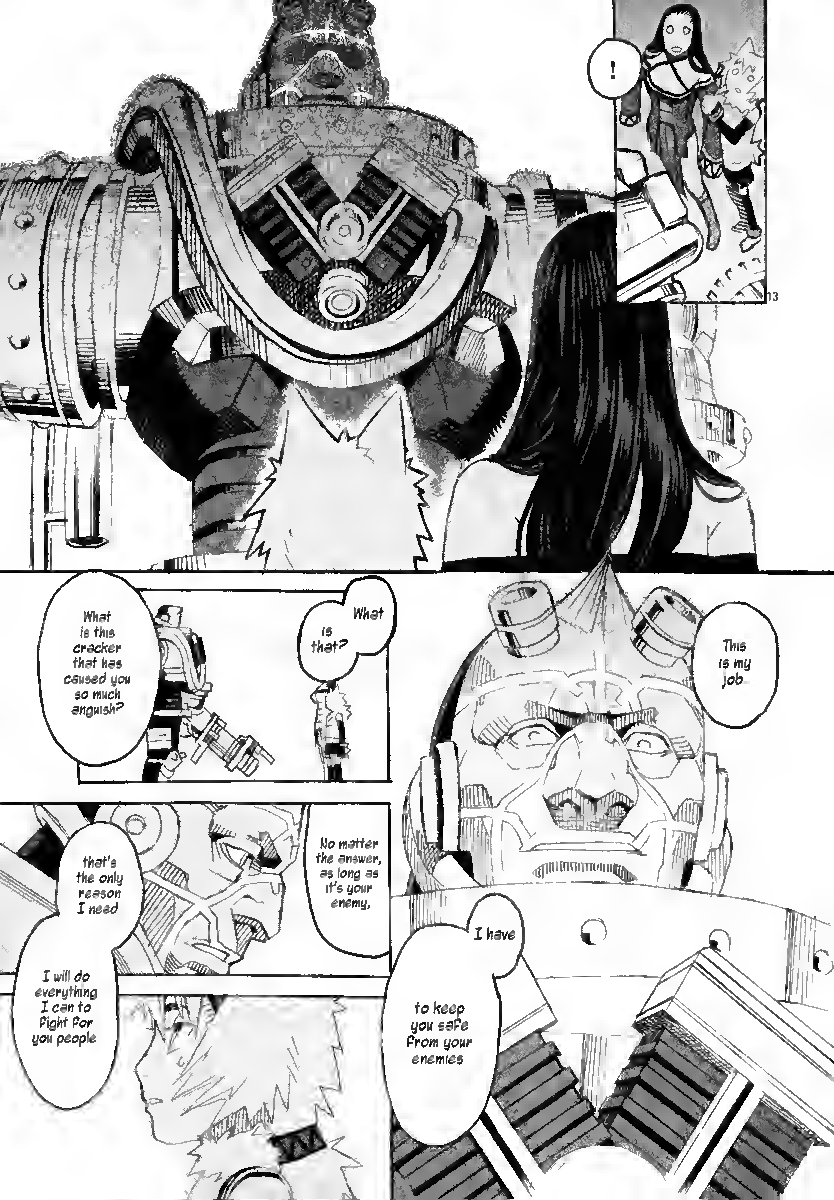

.....

We've got a plan
Listen up, people
?


Teleportation spells and logging out probably will not function correctly
Well, the Board itself is in a rather unstable state
Is there anything we can do, Crank?

What's the arm for?
We realized that directly attacking it will only inflict you with the virus
I'm switching to a long-range attack
You'll only get in the way
That won't be necessary
Maybe we should be helping you with a bit of covering fire...
And you can handle this just with that bit of equipment?

This should be an incentive for you not to get deleted
I'm going to give you this rare item
I'll need use of your summoning abilities
!
12
Even under an unstable state,
the board might still recognize short-casting spells
It's a jewel that will allow you to summon a wyvern once, with a very short incantation period
.....
You don't...
You just don't know what it's like!
There's no way we can beat it!
What?
Even for HIM!
We're just gonna die trying!
we can't win
I know it.


!
13
What is that?
What is this cracker that has caused you so much anguish?
This is my job.
No matter the answer, as long as it's your enemy,
that's the only reason I need
I will do everything I can to fight for you people
I have to keep you safe from your enemies

No matter what...
It's impossible...
You can't beat it...

Why would you do something so insane
Hey! Are you listening to me?
You stand absolutely no chance of winning in your current state!

?

What's Hmm? going on?
Our bodyguard has cut off communication and gone on a rampage
I can no longer reach him
Huh?
IF this guy is capable of deleting all the PCs on the board,
then we have to face him sometime

If I can't beat him, then my fate concludes itself here.
It will mean that I could not fulfill my mission to protect the Zoo
What happened to the guts you showed in that last battle?!
I didn't take any henchmen or pets under my wing who are that pathetic!
But
.....
Quit trembling and whining in the face of the enemy, you little sissy!
Shut your trap!
What was that for?!
15
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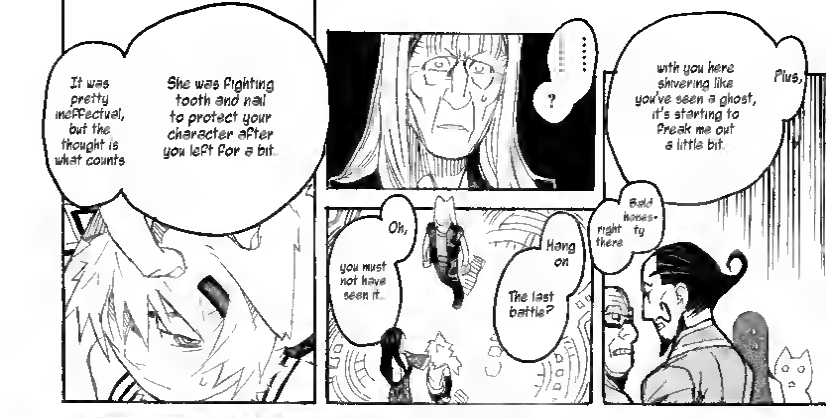
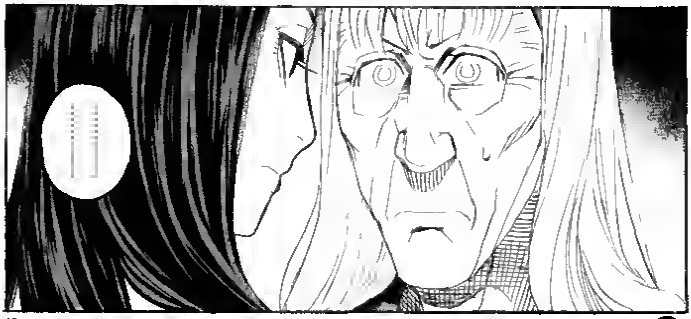
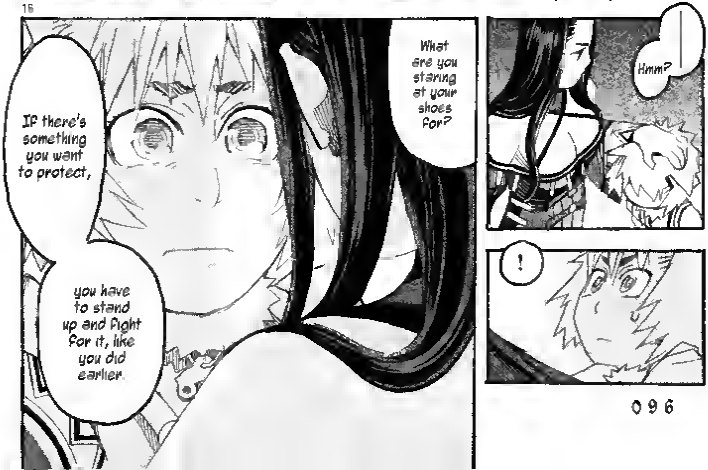

It was pretty ineffectual, but the thought is what counts
She was fighting tooth and nail to protect your character after you left for a bit.
.....
?
Plus, with you here shivering like you've seen a ghost, it's starting to freak me out a little bit.
Bold honesty right there
Hang on
The last battle?
Oh, you must not have seen it...

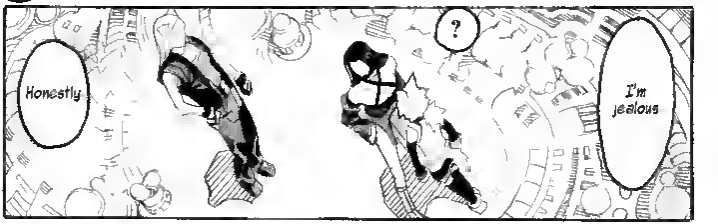



What are you staring at your shoes for?
Hmm?
If there's something you want to protect,
you have to stand up and fight for it, like you did earlier.
!

...

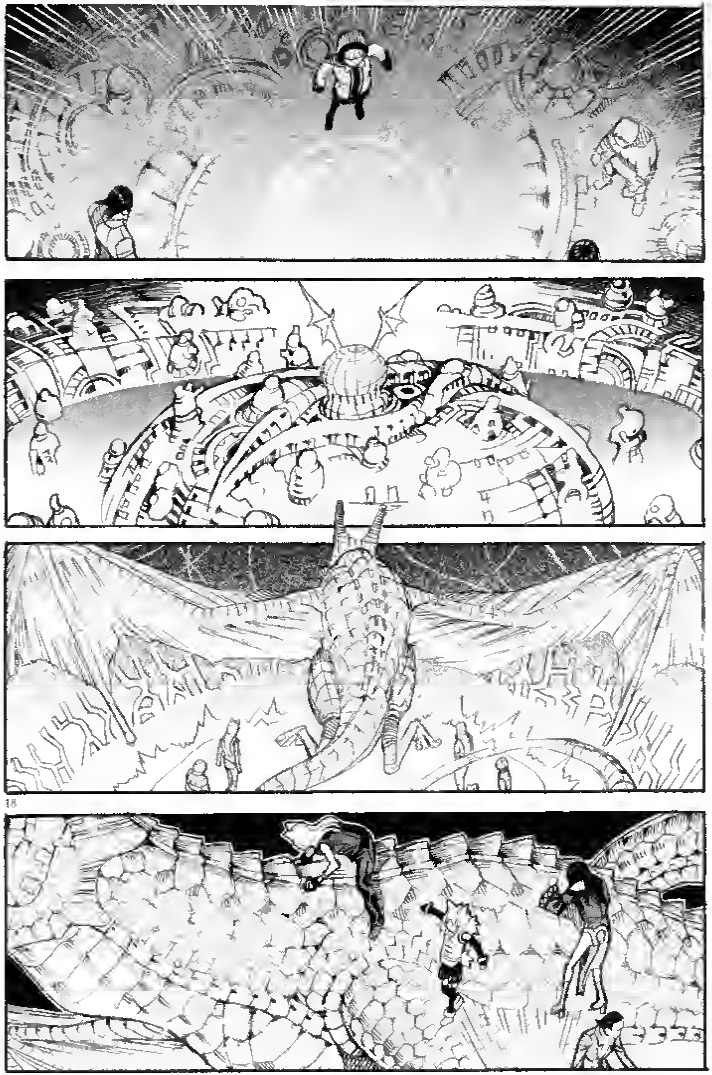
I can tell you you've been doing the right thing
You've gotten stronger,
If only by a barely-noticeable amount

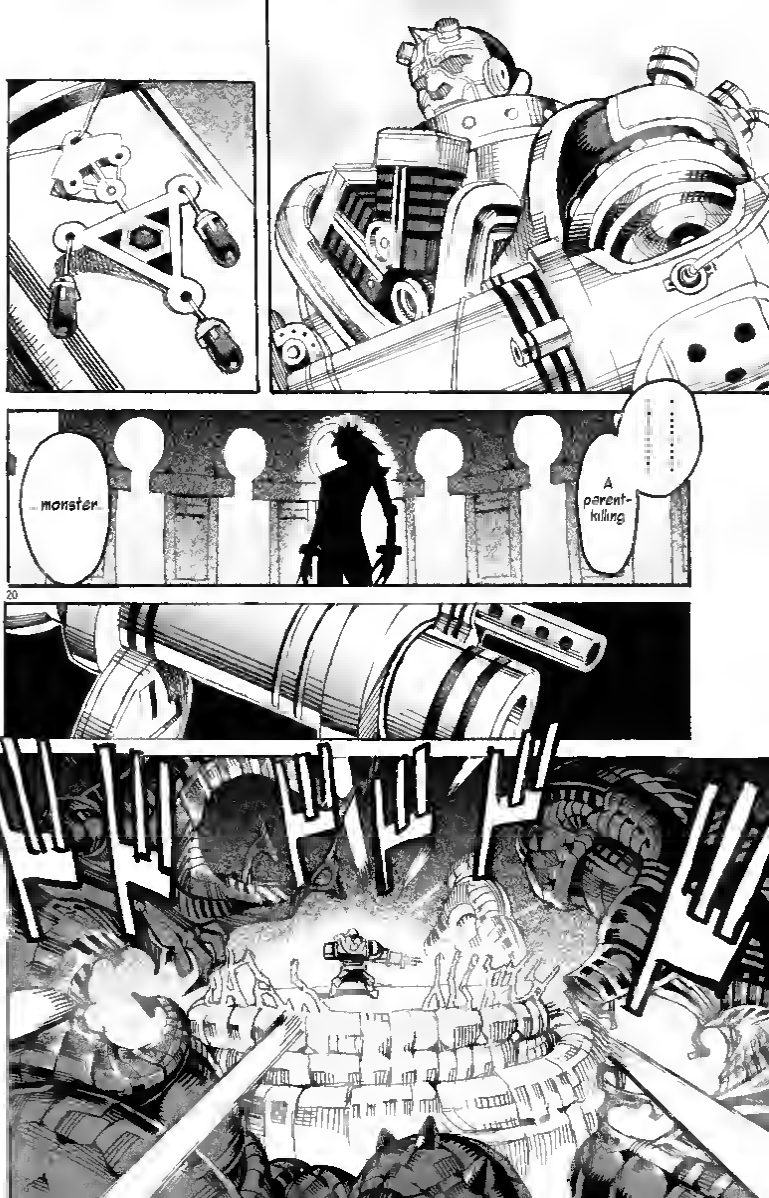
What a surprise
You know,
you're just like me


?
Honestly
I'm jealous

Here you go
You can have it back.

!
I know!
Here.
This is important to you, isn't it?




...monster
A parent-killing

Bring it on, then...
I couldn't ask for a better opponent...

(beep beep beep beep beep beep)
Can you hear me?
It's you, huh?
!
The best way for you to get out of here is
What are I--
Sorry about all the static
This is going to be my first and last transmission to you
Probably
if you cut some sort of deal with this Kabaki
But if you did,
Gaur would...

Listen!
I was only
I don't want your last time together
Gaur believes in you
to be ruined by the same mistake
I made

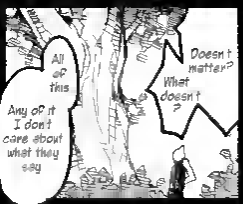
Hey!
Hello?

Hmph
24
Hey, you there
Mikato...
What happened to you?
I've been looking for Gaur
You haven't seen her, have you?
No but, why so ragged?
You wouldn't believe it The whole time I've been searching for her, I keep running into these booby traps
I'd stay out of the forest... if you know what's good for ya
Ohh that would be Gaur

I don't see any reason for her to have it in for me.
All I did was meet her for the first time and say I was going to be her grandma.
!
Mikeo, you're joining her family?
I said, that's probably Gaur's work
All those traps
?
Say what
Hmph
Then, you really don't know, Mikeo?
About her.
At Liza's request.
She asked me, and I couldn't find a reason to refuse.
25
She's
what?
I'm bearing the pain of proof as we speak
I believe it.
she has a very violent personality.
Well, you see,
I mean, she's...
At any rate, I would rethink your decision
I'm still a newcomer.
I don't know anything.

Well, it's not so much her,
it is every single person who's ever taken on the role of her parents
They've all been killed by Kabaki. Without exception.
26
.....
!

Gaun!
Ahoy there.
I need to talk with you.
Come on-
OW!
Oh.
Well.
If that's how you're going to act,
I've heard about this Kabaki
That you're the one who named it
I've got a question for you.
Do you call for this Kabaki, and control it yourself?
27


All of this
Doesn't matter?
What doesn't?
Any of it I don't care about what they say

Who cares?
Doesn't matter

You little brat
Oh, is that it?

It seems to be what everyone else thinks too
No reply?
I'll take that as a yes, then

but,
some of them never log back in, and we never hear from them again
Plus, this "killing" only happens in-game.. It's not like anything happens to them in real life
No, we're not saying that
So do you really believe Gaur is killing all of her parents this way?

All I see is a sicko getting his kicks messing around with you people
Now that's really stupid
Oh! So you all think it's some kind of curse or hex or something

So, has anyone ever tried to consider her position?
She gets avoided by all the others, and basically treated as if it's all her fault
Then it's no wonder Gaur sulks the way she does
You earned it, didn't you?
That's right. I said you earned it.
You got yourself isolated so you can sit alone and sulk about it.
!?
I know exactly why they all hate you, you little shit
You tried your damnedest to get ostracized
Must be having the time of your life
Why you-

I'm right here,
waiting for my chance to take you on
You got a problem? Bring it to me.
Well, well...
Looks like it does matter to you after all
ゴゴゴ
ゴゴ
ゴゴ
ゴゴ
What's this?
Total weakling.
You've even got your hands full
dealing with an old-ass noob grandma.
In fact,
I'd say that as a—

why didn't you say anything?
You didn't speak up, so everyone suspects and avoids you.
So,
I guess you're not such a pushover when it counts
Kabaki
About what?
If you stopped sulking and actually spoke for yourself, some of them would understand
Nobody
Nothing
No they wouldn't
Never.
Someone
Yes they would.
Little, at the very least.
She believes in you.

She told me you were a wonderful person
And I believe her
Oh, so she's the one who sent you after me.
Nothing...
You don't know a single, little... thing
You don't even know a single thing about me
You believe that?
Why?
Hang on, kid
Do you actually think all the things this Kabaki is doing
are really your own fault?
.....
.....
32

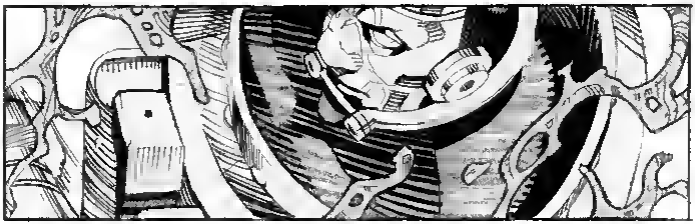
I believe in you.
So, you shouldn't think that.
But you don't know anything.
You're just saying that.
What if it turns out, I actually am controlling Kabaki, and killing all those people?
33
I believe in you.
I don't think you're the kind of person who would do that.
How can you "believe" in me?
You don't know me well enough to say that!
You don't know anything at all!
You don't know Kabaki, you don't know me!
You know nothing!
Nothing!
You see...?
.....

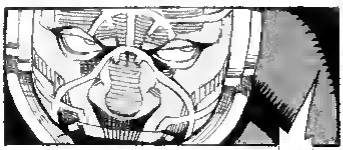
Huh?
is something I decide on my own, deep in my stomach
Listen
Whether to trust or not
34
It's my own stomach that's making the decisions.
That's why I never feel regret
Can't Fight that
When you can't tell what to do, the best line of action is to ask your stomach
See, when you feel a great rush of blood in your abdomen, right below the navel, a real lifeforce, that's a sign that you can hold convictions about what you're up against
Not on your life.
Really ?!
See my point?
You're so easy to Fool!
Now,
I learned that little trick from a cult I joined once. Pricks took all my money and left me out in the cold.

You should try settling down sometimes and asking your stomach what to do
If you do that,
at least you won't regret what you end up doing anymore
.....
Weird old gramma lady
What?
What was that? Did I hear you right?
What?!
You called me "gramma"
That's right, I'm your grandma!
No, not that!
I mean it like, you old bitch!
Wasn't that precious. Go on, call me Grandma again.
Hey, get away from me....
What's the big...
I just told you, it wasn't that!

Grandma
36
What?
I just remembered something from the past
You know, it seems like were always fighting, from the beginning to the end
You and me
Yeah, I guess.
For some reason it always ended up that way
Did you know this, Grandma?
They started selling this fancy new upgraded interface
But, I'll always remember that
I will always remember
Yeah
When you use it, you can feel the warmth of other people, the touch of their skin

Because of that,
I know what you meant now
The whole bloodflow power thing
You know.
Can you feel my stomach pressed against your back,
right now?
.....
Yep
You know what, Gramma?
What?
I
I love you
Well,
I don't need the latest technology
to figure that one out





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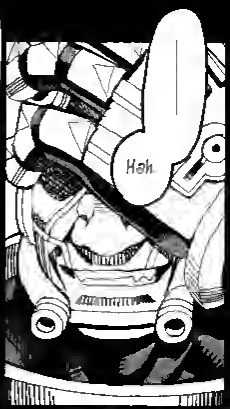
!?

He doesn't stand a chance out there!
What's wrong?
His engine only activates when a very specific set of circumstances is fulfilled,
Even using Guts, with his stats all maxed out, this monster thing is an illegal hack!
If only I'd noticed sooner.
What do you mean?
I wasn't thinking
He's probably still dragging his previous job behind him. Far worse than I'd expected

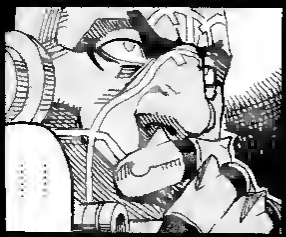
ドッドッドッドッ
I think,
he's planning to simply die right here.

I would kill him and kill him and kill him and kill him and Seki would keep coming back after me, so I just kept killing him and killing him and killing him and killing him.
He would cling to me covered in blood and screaming in rage.
and I would kill him, over and over and over and over. It was yawningly predictable
If there is a Hell, so be it.
It's got my name written all over it
Well, I guess it's not a bad thing that you won't be able to torture and kill players anymore.
Your next job will be the exact opposite
This time you will protect a PC

However, their request is not the protection of all their members
Our client in this case is not an individual, but a group
If you don't want your character data harmed, don't log in
Simple
Pro-tecting what?


Heh.

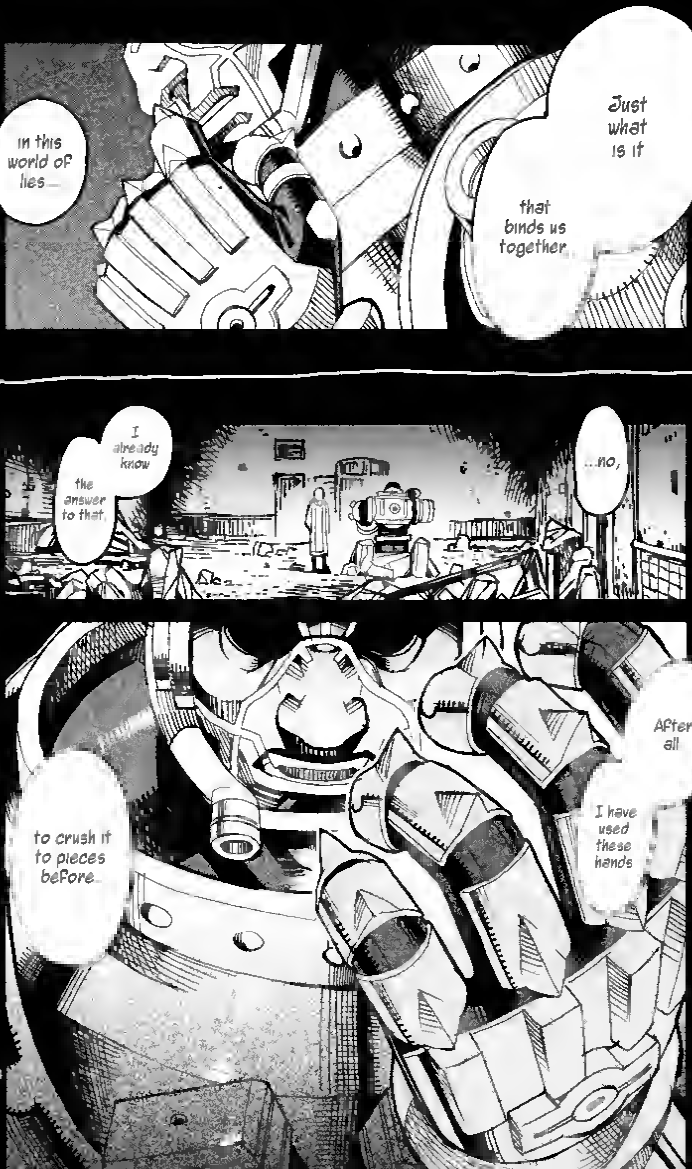
2


.....

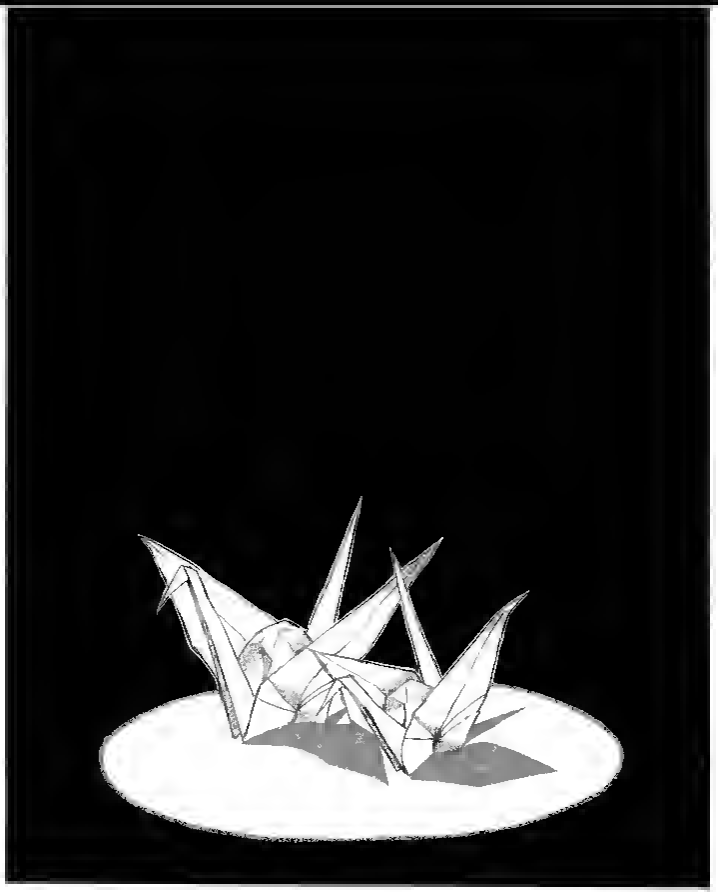
All right.
I'll do it.
Are you certain?
That was an awfully abrupt decision

It's somewhat abstract, I admit
but to use the words of their leader
they want the bonds that tie them together protected...

I need money as soon as possible
Plus
you were right
Working for others' sake
does make me feel much better
.....
3
Please think it over.
They even said you might not need to start imme-
I'm interested in this client now.
I'll start as soon as tomorrow
I went to take a good look
at the bonds
these people are talking about
Crank,
what do you think?


Just what is it that binds us together...
In this world of lies...
...no,
I already know the answer to that
After all I have used these hands
to crush it to pieces before...

Chapter 13 - Lying Wolf #10



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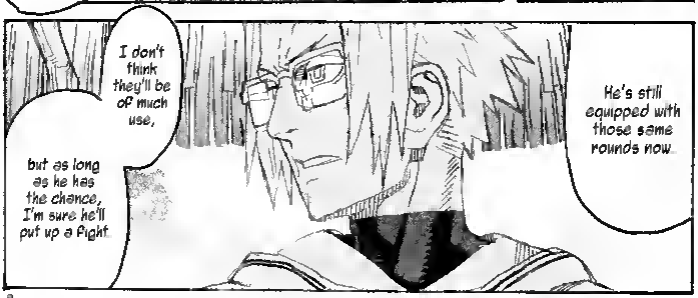
!?

His character does have some virus protection, which means that he should be resistant to attack, up to a point
However, he lacks a proven, effective form of attack that might overcome Kabaki.

The other time,
it was a very simple hack to boost attributes,
so some simple HP-halving magic cannons did the trick
The two of us have been involved with defeating illegally hacked players before...
.....


I don't think they'll be of much use,
but as long as he has the chance, I'm sure he'll put up a fight
He's still equipped with those same rounds now...

8

Are you actually worried?
For him?
Never thinks things through
He's always like this
.....

I can say with all honesty
that it would be a shame to lose such a powerful character.
I'm not even sure
But,
ズーン
ズッ
ズッ
ズーン

ドルン
ギャあああ

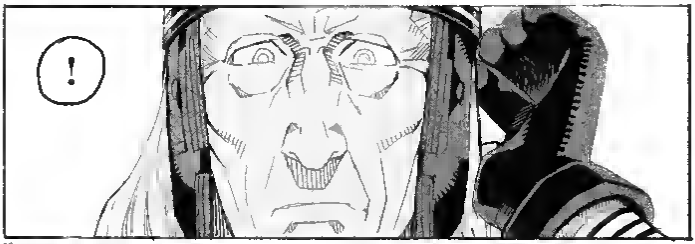
ああああ
Finally I get a good look at you
Now we're getting
13
12
ああああああああああああ

To the good stuff!!

Is that hunk 'a junk gonna be all right?
.....
Cewt-ainly, I should hope
He'th got thuch a powerful character
Bloody roit.
And it ain't just 'is stats wot's tough.
Why's that?
I mean,
Guvna knows what e's doin' out there.

Guts is a handy hidden skill to have, no doubt, but its use tends to get ya killed so often, you'll never find a bloke who uses it loik he does.
After all, all ya gotta do is die once, and the hidden skill goes away foreva.
So if he's kept it on all this time,
it means he's never died once.
Tha's the mark of a master of survival, that is.
Yeah but, couldn't that mean that he's just a hacked character?
You see that attack? Could've been some real early embedded Linen backdoor stuff.
If he's thurvived for that long,
he'd have to be thome thort of monthter.
Anyone wif a hacked avatar ain't gonna show off his chops loik that
!?
Huh?
Gaur
I'm sorry.

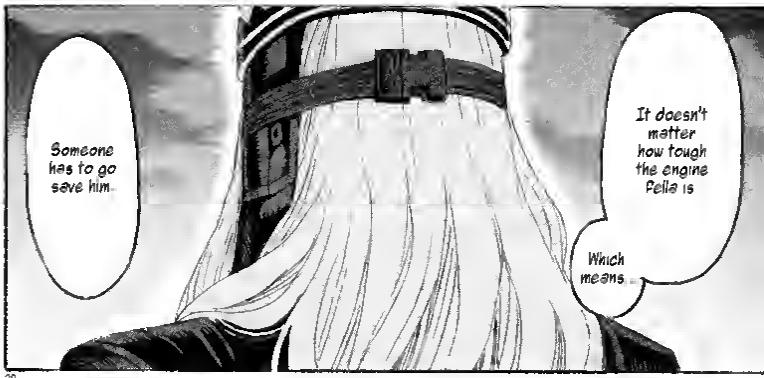
There's something I've been keeping a secret from you.
!?
Hey, wait
Uh?
It's you.
You've got my hog.
Let's have it back then.
If you don't listen to me, I'll activate that curse...
All right! I didn't say I'd never give it back!
Hmph.


!

Can you-
What's the secret?
Umm Grand-ma,
.....

Earlier,
Huh?
I was telling you
That I had a powerful trick up my sleeve
That wasn't about this engine Pella, or Kabaki,
it was actually
about me.
I had kept it a secret,
but when I ride my motorcycle like this, my own secret ability activates,
and I go into a sort of super-mode which renders me nearly invincible. That's all.
What?

Nobody is going to beat Kabaki
It won't happen
What is that...
Why did you-
Wha,
.....
You are such a sucker.
She was that powerful?
I had no idea!
Sucker


Someone has to go save him
It doesn't matter how tough the engine Pella is
Which means...

Besides,
isn't there something you really ought to be saying aside from all that?
I can't imagine that you going out on your own will have any effect on those two
It's pointless.

What's your plan?

……

There's one last thing.
I need to ask from you
I know, Gaur

ほれ!

No matter what happens in the future,
I want you to trust Chloe.

You're the only one who can save her

Wh,
.....
Why would I-
Why does she need...
Trust can make a person stronger
Please, give her your strength
Why?

If only I was a bit stronger
I can lend you my strength.
You will be stronger
I wanted to be stronger.
Why do you say this, now?!
I'm sorry
So long as I have your strength,
I know that I can do just about anything
Gaur, you already lent me yours
Thank you.
Now, I need to go.

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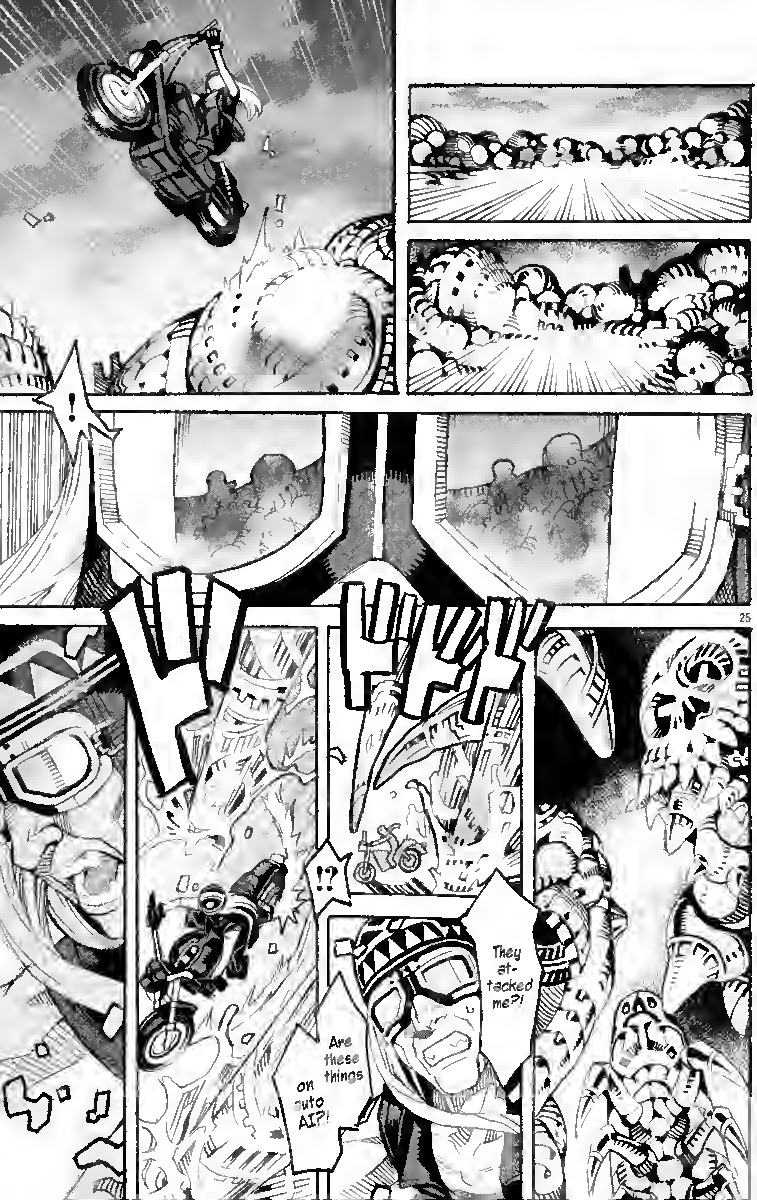

!
ドドドド
!?
They attacked me?!
Are these things on auto AI?!

CalPornia?
And why would you make up something like that?
Well, when I see her kinda half-pouting,
I just can't stop myself from teasin' the kid...
Yes indeed,
but surely you recognize there are times for joking, and *other* times less so?
Why don't you try to meet her in real life?
Gaur really
really does care about you
Huh?
Do I look like I'm joking around with you?
Fine then
That just means the present interface technology isn't *all* that

I've been lying to you about...
Chloe, there's one other thing
!?
And that is, my personality.
The me you know is freewheeling brash, and unfazed by the little things
It's the ideal me that I always wished I could be..
But it's a lie, a lie that couldn't be further from the real me...
What difference would it make, if she came to visit me?
All she'd find is an unfamiliar, weakly old hag hooked up to machines
But...
It's pathetic
There are plenty of less fortunate people than me
I've lived more than enough for one person

But I'm scared.
I can't help it.
I'm scared stiff.

!!

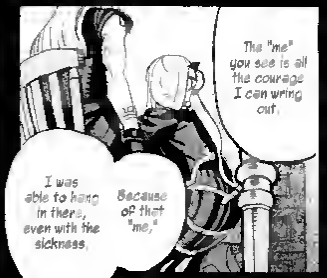
I've put over a dozen hits on you now.
The rest is how long the antibodies hold out.
Gotta reach the end
Gotta
My character isn't responding anymore!
Shit!
I gotta get my ass movin'!

I feel bad about this.
I'm going to be leaving you all alone.
But but,
Mikao
What you've chosen is a very hard, painful road
You won't be able to just give up and complain, like me.
But, I-

Don't cry now
Chloe

And it must have been
because you all were there

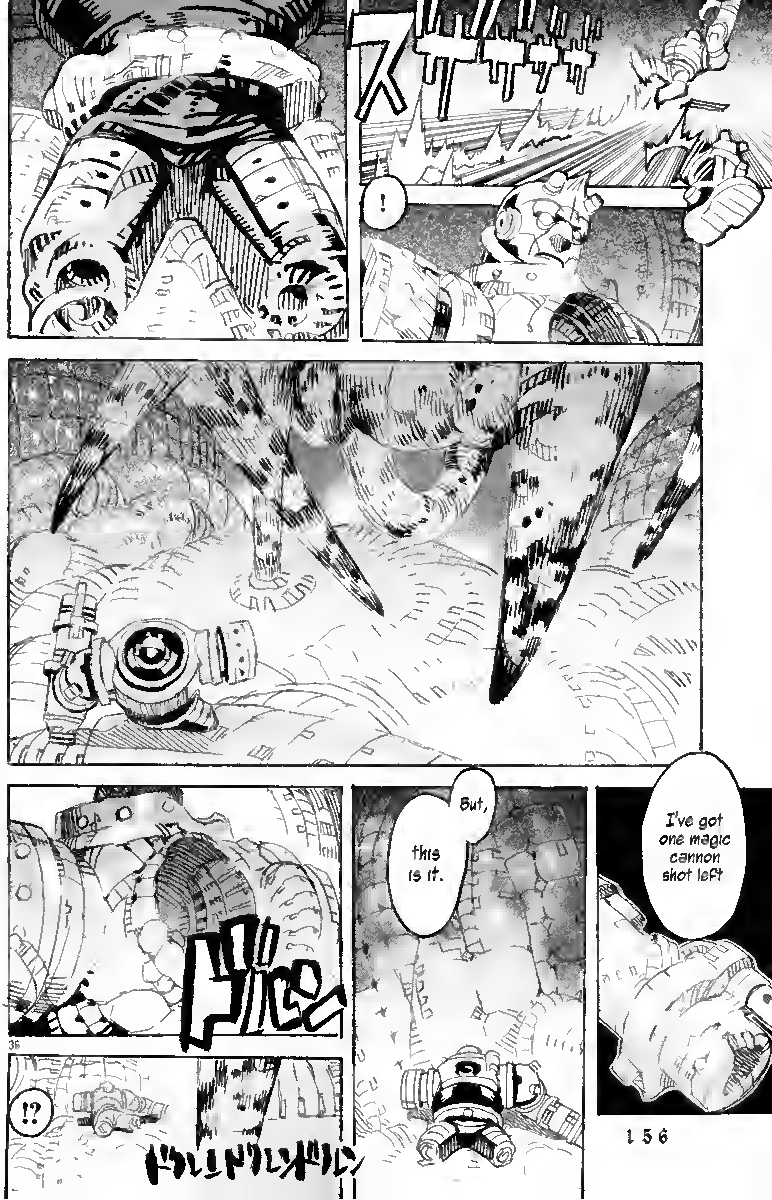
...but you know what?
I've been a sham, pretending I'm someone else to all the people around me
And I'm tired of it
I still had a hell of a time.
I really did.


The "me" you see is all the courage I can wring out.
Because of that "me,"
I was able to hang in there, even with the sickness.

but I also wanted
to be a source of courage for Gaur, too
And maybe this is just me being arrogant,
33
I already knew
From the very beginning
The truth is,
I was lying
to myself
Never
I never tried to see through that one
That this story about retiring to live in California,
it was all just a bluff
You what?!
But,
I decided not to notice
It's really a piece of cake to tell when she's lying
Most of the things she says are completely false anyway

Gaur
.....
The last thing I said
Back there
That I trusted in her
34
I don't actually believe a single thing she says
She's got no super-mode. She's just going to go out and die
It was such a lie
I lied, because I didn't want to say good-bye,
but I knew that if there was any time to say it, it was gonna be now!

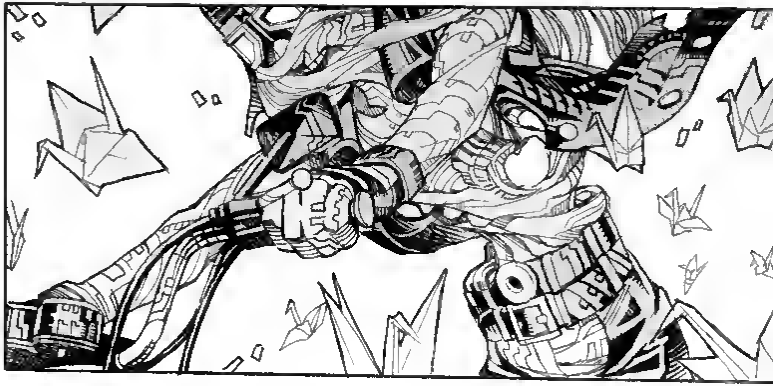
what am I gonna do, now?
I.
I couldn't
do a single thing for Grandma.
KK
35


スサッ
!
I've got one magic cannon shot left
But, this is it.
ドドドド
!?

ドルンドルンドルンドルンドルン

Good luck Grandma
With your super-mode...
I'll be rooting for you
I'll lend you my strength.
and I'll always
be with you...

38



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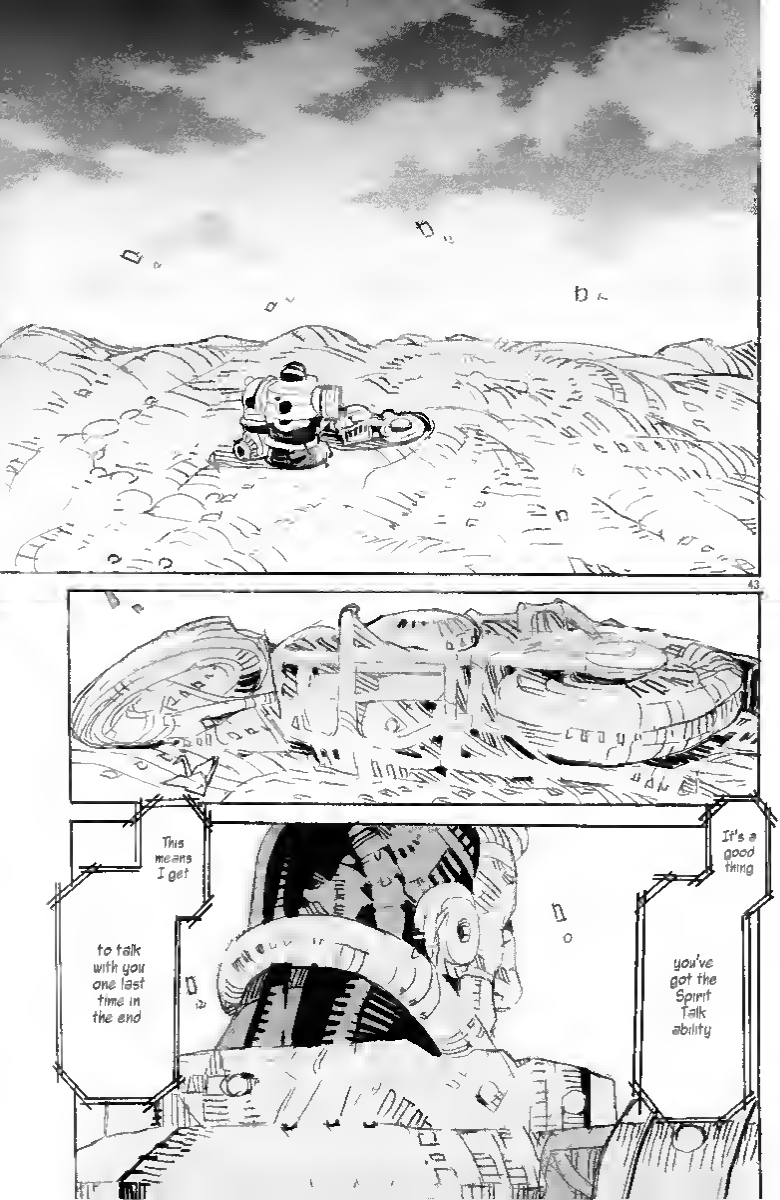
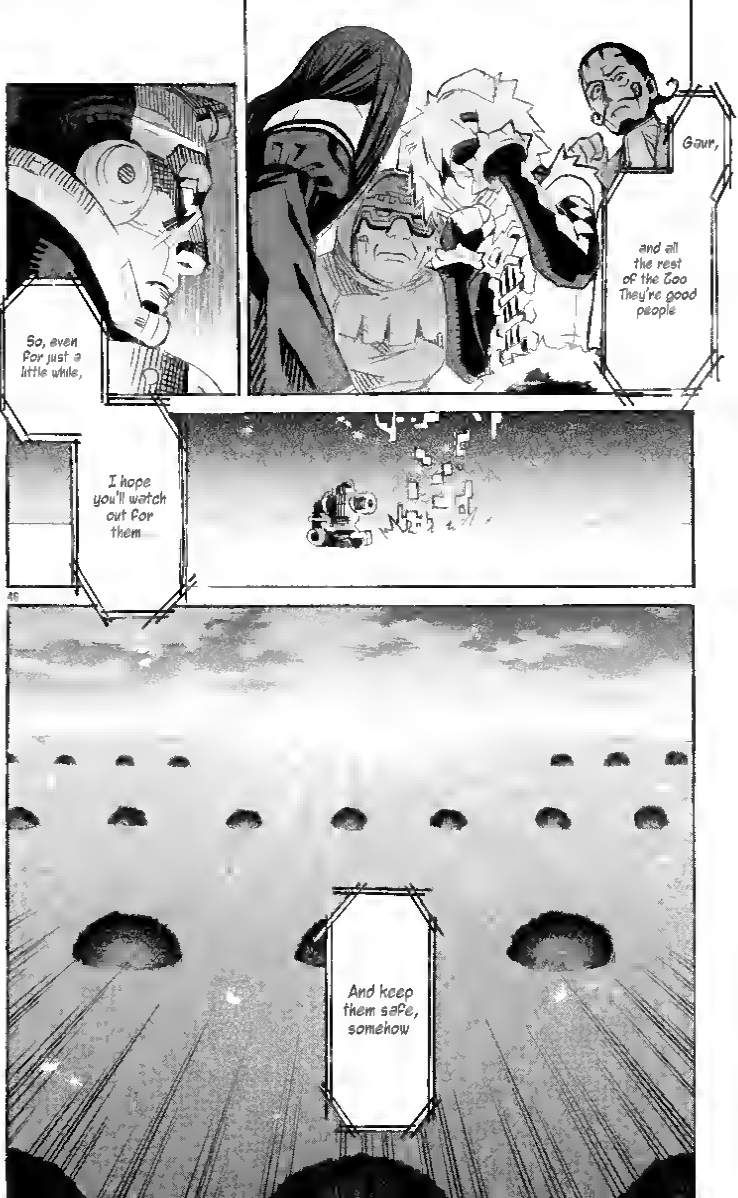

This means I get
to talk with you one last time in the end
It's a good thing
you've got the Spirit Talk ability

All gone
I don't think it'll have the guts to show up twice while you're around
Where's Kebaki?
But Gaur was right
I knew that sooner or later, this was going to be unavoidable
I even made up lies so the Zoo members wouldn't contact outside players and start fights
Until now, I thought I could keep them safe on my own
But I didn't drive it away
You did...
I'm sorry
They're going to need your help from now on
Maybe I just wasn't ready for that
44
That's why
I felt like leaving the Zoo in your care
You really are a nice guy, aren't you?
What for?
For not being able to protect you through the end

What will you do, about the Farewell party?
It's about time I'll be going now
Just so you know, it's not a sure thing that I'm dying
You never know, I might actually be returning to California to live my life in splendor
You know what a liar I am
All right
What?
You sound like you're visiting a funeral, kid
I can't stand sappy stuff
I'll pass, thanks
I was just requested to bring you back to the party
You knew about that?
You don't have a reason to lie to me about your illness
IF it's coming from a dying old lady, right?
Even a hardass like you might grant my last wish,
Course I do


Gaur,
and all the rest of the Zoo. They're good people
So, even for just a little while,
I hope you'll watch out for them...
And keep them safe, somehow

Chapter 14 - Afterimage

……
Mm.
……
Ah!
2
Aaah ah ah!
Who!
Gah,
you're awake!

Are you okay, Gar?
.....
...nn!
W-W-What were you doing?!
A good-morning kiss.
You don't do that?
Just now!
Oh?
Well, you do now.
No! No, No, I don't!!
Let me give you another, so you get used to..
Knock it off.
Besides, what are you doing sleeping in my bed?
This is MY house!
What did you do,
just wait here the entire time for me to connect to the board?
Yep.
Yep ?
You're kidding.

I'm not in your online family.
So if you want to play good-morning kiss or whatever,
do it at your own home.
Uh.
.....
Oh, right.
It's today.

Erm,
Do you take so-and-so, for worse or for poorer, in sickness and death...
It's "in sickness and in health."
You can't just focus on the bad parts!
But Sabure,
of course they'll be on good terms when they're feeling fine.
5
Besides, why do I have to play the minister?
I don't know how to do the ring exchange or anything.
Because you look the part more than the rest of us, Mizuku.
I went to a missionary school, and they expect me to carry out the whole ceremony.
I've never been married!
Well,
why don't you come into the light?
No.
I'm fine here.
.....
Agora-phobia?
Yes.
And I can't be out in the middle of crowds.
We have to be at the rehearsal...
Let's go to the hall.
I have agora-phobia!
Stop, stop, stop!!

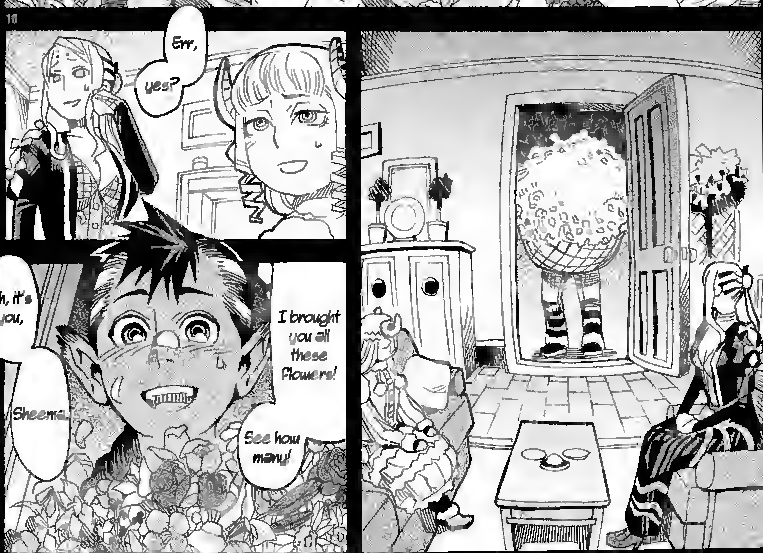
I'm working on it.
If I can conquer my fear of open spaces online, maybe I can do it in real life
Err, but,
there are going to be many rows of people here in the square.
All right, people.
The four of us share one heart.
Umm,
the bride and groom came in from here.
Get a layout of the area and draw up a battle plan. Circle the square!
But I can tell you this! ONE of us better get that bouquet!
No hard feelings no matter which of us gets it.
6
I can't imagine this will go right.
Is this ceremony going to work?
The groom comes up to you first, and then the bride has to walk down the aisle.
The bride and groom enter separately.

Huh?
I mean,
when the bride makes her entrance.
Anyways,
shouldn't there be some sort of escort for her?
We've already had someone picked out for that ages ago.
Oh.
Don't worry about that.
7
Ohh, right, right.
This is how I'm going to escort Mom down the aisle.
So first,
I reach out and take your hand.
You don't get it,
If you assume it's so simple, you're bound to mess up when it hap...
I mean,
you're just walking in a straight line.
Ummm,
I don't see the point in doing all of these rehearsals.

There aren't gonna be any roots at the ceremony
...don't worry about it
Yeah.
!?
But...
If I mess up, Mom's going to be a laughingstock.
And I mean,
it's a very special ceremony that will last in her memories for the rest of her life.
Well,
If you don't like your mom getting married so much,
why don't you just tell her?
Huh?
What,
did you think I couldn't tell?

I mean,
the whole thing with Chloe marrying the doctor was so sudden
As if even you didn't know about it.
Don't kids usually worry about stuff like that in real life?
But you always just smile and smile and smile.
It's so unnatural.
9
.....
I think that you should just say what you feel.
You're so smart, Ger.
I'm a smart girl,
who tells her parents stuff like that.
Uhh, er.
Actually, um.

Well,
I don't really have a right to complain about it from the start.
I mean here in the Zoo,
my mom is EVERYONE'S mom.
...sorry.
Neither can I...
Look!
Look at these, Mom!

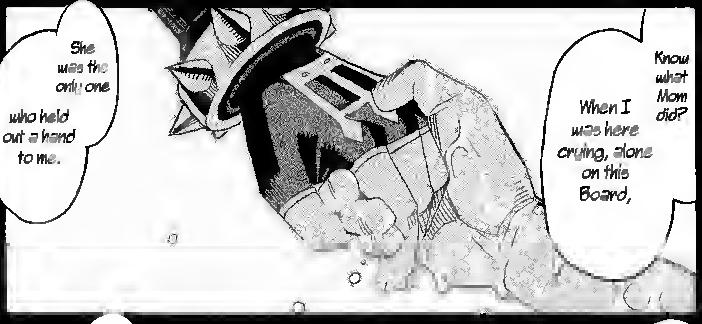

Err,
yes?
Oh, it's you,
Sheema.
I brought you all these flowers!
See how many!

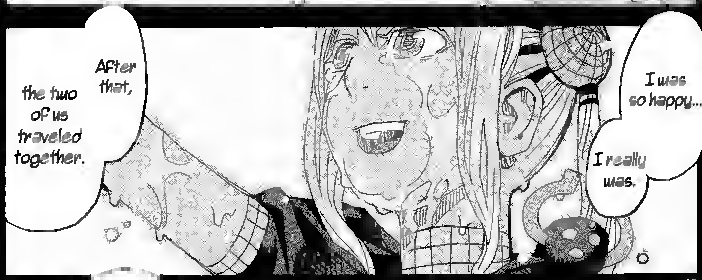
I thought they would look nice pinned on your dress or in the bouquet,
so I picked as many different kinds as I could find!
Oh!
It's .. a bit much, though
I'm sorry, Sheema.
I have a guest now. Could you come back later?
Oh, okay.
You did say that someone new was coming today.
I'm sorry!
Later.
Uhh, please be kind to her.
She called you Mom
Is she your real daughter?
No,
We simply play those roles here, as a method of counseling.
She's a good girl and very hardworking.
She just doesn't really know when to stop.
I see.

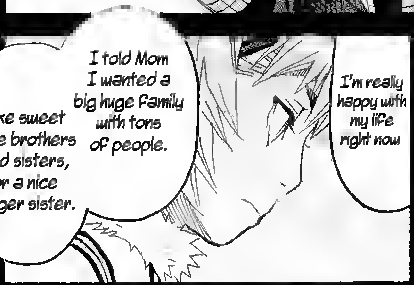
You've probably seen several Families around here already.
They're all part of a "re-raising" role-playing system.
Basically, the clients who come to us with a problem to be solved play the part of children,
and the people who participate as volunteers play the part of the parent
12
I see.
.....
My husband and I take on the parental role for the people we really feel need serious attention
But only my husband and myself actually have real counseling qualifications
I just saw everyone getting along and having a good time together, making Families and Friends and getting married, and I thought it looked fun.
I hope that I can join in somehow.
I mean, this is my job, after all.
No, don't apologize
I'm sorry,
For making you waste time on scum like me, when you have a wedding to attend.
I say my husband, but...
We're actually having the wedding today.
So, um...
Well, yes.

I see.
She's going to be a tough nut to crack.
But at the same time, I always find myself thinking,
"You people are such pathetic losers, quit playing house and die already."
Umm,
But I know it's impossible that you would accept a horrible, filthy lowlife such as myself among you.
...it's just not going to happen, I know.
Don't worry, everyone here is very nice.
And you will be our family here.
13
You know what?
I was Mom's first online child.
When you feel emotional pain or want someone to listen,
just come to me, and think of me like your mother.
I think of everyone at the Zoo, including you, as even more precious than real children.

At the time we hadn't met Mesaka yet, so we didn't have these avatars.
And we hadn't even met the doctor yet, so the Goo didn't exist.
14
Come and play, Gar.
It's fun splashing water!
Umm, no,
I'm cool.
Ack!
Woof!
!?
Heh heh.
I sure am falling down a lot today.
Hey!
You okay, Lize?
Umm,
Yeah.


Know what Mom did?
When I was here crying, alone on this Board,
She was the only one who held out a hand to me.

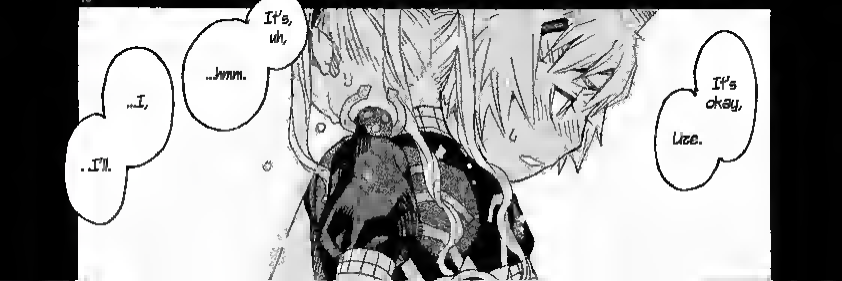

I was so happy...
I really was.
After that, the two of us traveled together.


I'm really happy with my life right now
I told Mom I wanted a big huge family with tons of people.
like sweet little brothers and sisters, or a nice bigger sister.

First it was me, who asked her to be my mom
That's how Mom came to be my mom now.

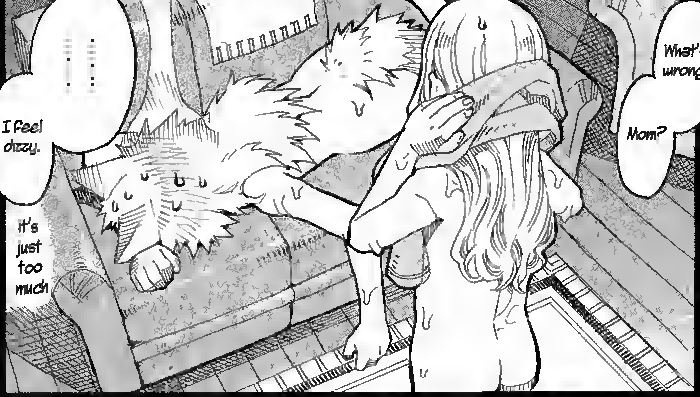
I love everyone in the Zoo, and I want to say thanks to Mom.
Which is why I want to escort Mom at the wedding and give her all of my blessing that I possibly can.

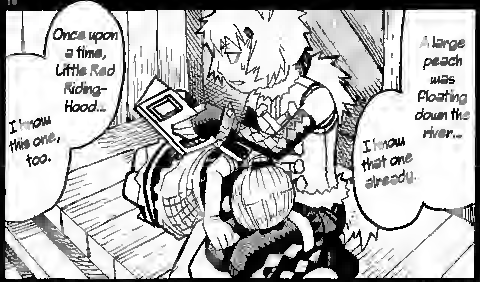
But I want so bad to see Mom off with a nice smile on my face.
Why...?
.....
But, it's so strange.
The more I practice it, the less I can do it
ぎゅ--


It's okay, Lize.
It's, uh,
..hmm.
..I,
. .I'll.

I'll be here..
For you...
What?
I'm...
I'm still here!
Actually, Gar,
I wanted to ask you something.
Yeah?
Go ahead.
From now until the wedding,
will you pretend to be my mom?

...Uh...
What?!
WHAAAAAT?!
Mom,
shall I wash your back?
Umm,
okay.
One, two, three, four, five
Eeeek!

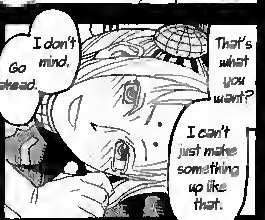

What's wrong, Mom?
I feel dizzy.
It's just too much.


Once upon a time, Little Red Riding-Hood...
I know this one, too.
A large peach was floating down the river...
I know that one already.

Mom.
What?

I want to hear a story that you made up.
...Um, what?
I think Sandra Dyuble used this in a manga once.

I want to hear YOUR story.
Fine then! Just say the title of a story you like, and I'll download it!
むき


I don't mind. Go ahead.
That's what you want?
I can't just make something up like that.

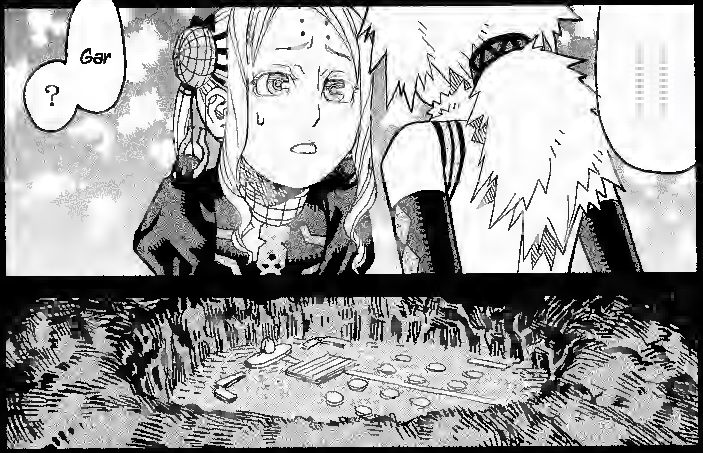
Read me a story.

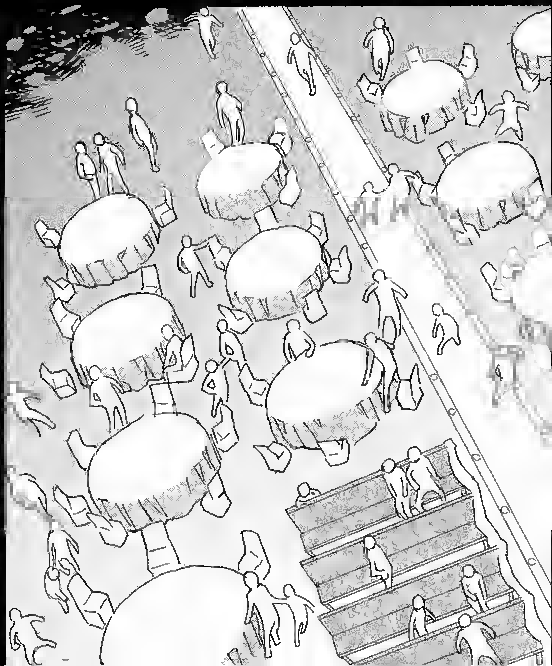
A long time ago, there was a girl who was a big fat liar.
Uhmm, ...a girl. Okay. There was,
Was she a bad girl, then?
She would tell the other kids, "A terrible angry monster is gonna come and eat you!"
Everyone hated her because she was such a liar, and she was always mad.
19
And then, one day, everyone came to her house because they were so mad...
...that sounds so sad, for her.
She was born with the inability to tell the truth,
Not so much bad, as just miserable.
So no matter how much she loved her mom and dad, she could only say she hated them.
That's a terrible ending, Gar!
Why does it end in a bloodbath?!
It's not MY fault!
I'm just making it up on the fly!

So what happens when everyone is dead and that girl is left all alone?! How does she feel?!
I don't know!
Fine, the terrible angry monster ate her from her head to her toes, and nobody was left! The end!
Um.
I went too far.
Why am I apologizing?
Sorry, Uze...
.....
Sometimes, God is really terrible.
Just because she wanted one of her lies to turn true,
He didn't have to make the monster come to life.

Next time, let's let her have a happy ending.
I'll help you think up a good story, okay?
But, it was just so sad at the end.
It's okay.
Your story was very good.
.....
No.
Fine, Uze.
We wasted playing Mommy, and I won't talk about this again.

Yeah?
?
I was wondering, Gar...
Why do you live by yourself, in this cabin on the edge of the woods?
...Okay
Don't lie to me.
You've never been part of a family with anyone in the Zoo.
And whenever I try to bring it up with my Mom, you always avoid the subject.
That's how I like it...
Well, you know what they say about lone wolves
21
I mean,
Remember that ferocious monster I told you about before?
I think there's one of those inside me, too
I don't hate it..
But-
But, what?
I'm just not cut out for that stuff.
I mean...
Do you hate the whole idea of having a father and mother?


Gar
?



Oh!
Yes she is, and she was looking for Lize all today.
Umm,
Is Chloe here?
Um, can, um,
Just a moment.
I'll go call for her.
Oh?
What is it, you two?

Chloe's in here. Want me to get her?
She'll be at this for awhile.
You won't believe how pretty she looks!
This is so wonderful! I'm thinking I should get married twice, offline and on
We just finished downloading the dress Mesaka spent all night making.
Can you, um,
No, wait...
How can you chicken out when we're this close?!
I've been avoiding her for awhile, so I don't know what to do!
I can't help it!

That's why you need to do this!
If you don't want to get nervous and mess up, you should talk first, and-
But I CAN'T!
What am I supposed to say to Mom...

All right.
Remember what you said?
Until the wedding starts, I'm your mom.
And guess what Mom knows about you?
That you're a very good girl.

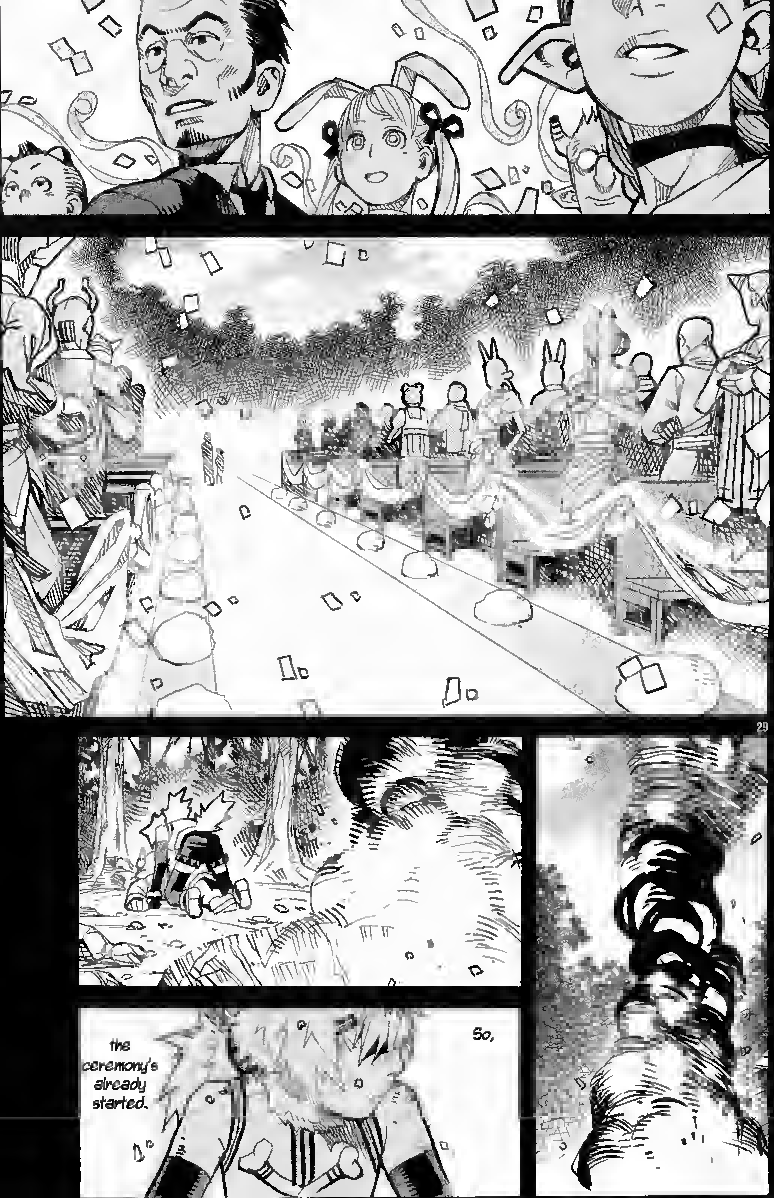
It doesn't matter that you get angry, and yell, and run around. I don't care.
I love you the way you are.
Just by being there, you make me happy. You make my life complete...
I love you, Lize.
You know.
So, um,

!?
Whoa-
aah!
dammit!!
Just GO,
25
That was so mean, Gar!
You didn't have to KICK me!
Uze?

I,
I was
so afraid you hated me...
Ah
Mo-
M,
You came.
I'm so glad.
Mommmmmy!
わあああ

Why does the sight of complete strangers celebrating fill me with such bubbling black hatred?
God, if only I could chuck a bomb in their midst...
All the hate inside my heart...
Ahhh...
No, I mustn't! How did I get so filthy despicable?
What's up?
Whatcha doin'?

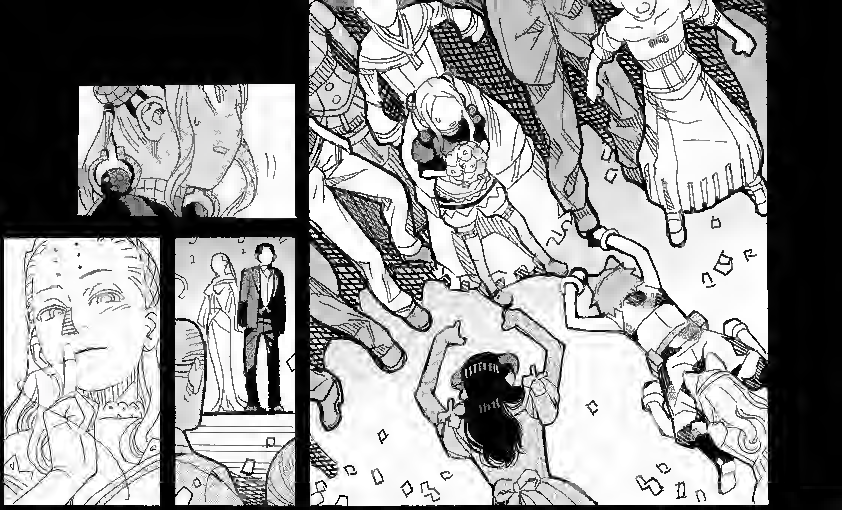
NOOOOOOOOOO...
!?
I won't do it again
I won't do it again
I won't do it again.
I'm sorry
I'm sorry
I'm sorry,
Wait a minute!
You can't go that way..
"PING"
!?

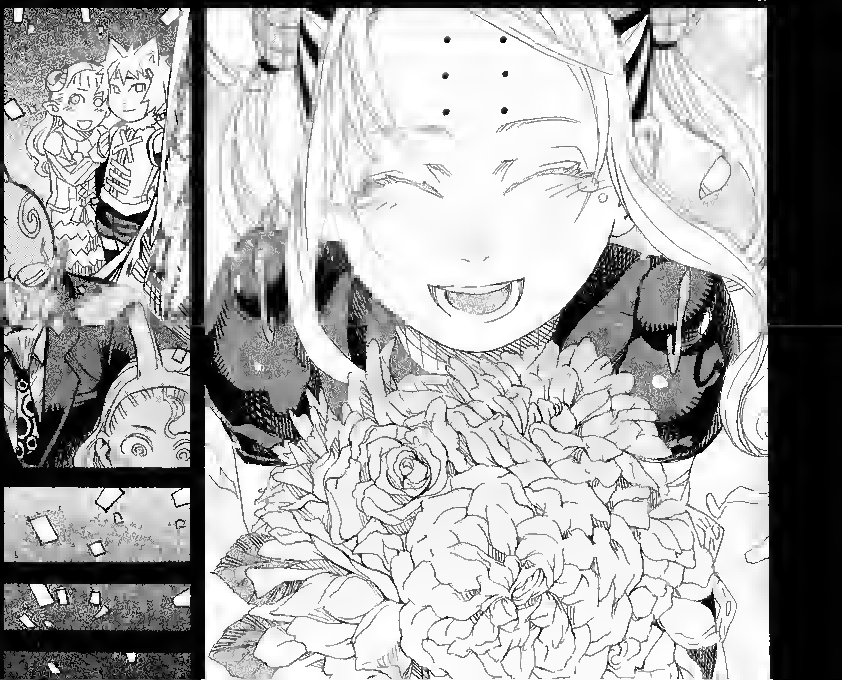

So,
the ceremony's already started.

How she'll smile and laugh.
I wonder...
30
I set all those booby traps when I was mad,
but I don't think I used bombs
This bugs me, though.
that could have been deadly...
Are, Are you hurt?
I've never been so-
I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry
Uh, no
...Huh?
Whew.
Good.
Um,

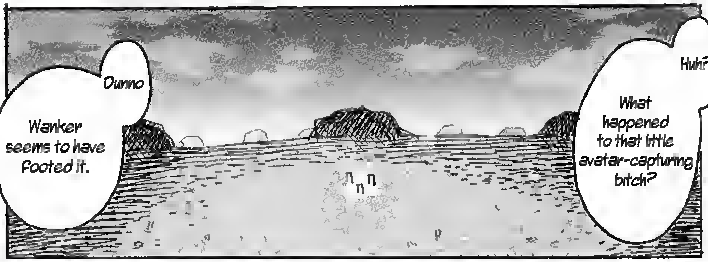
Ho?
I'm Gaur. You are?
I-I-I-I am,
I'm just little old Merino, that's all-
31
I'm feeling oddly lonely right now...
Can you stay right here like this for awhile, Merino?
Wuh, well,
if lowly little me will do, absolutely!!
Good
Thanks
Uhhum,
If you don't mind, could I ask a favor too?
Sure
What?
Gaur, may I call you "Sister Dear," from now on?
Huh?

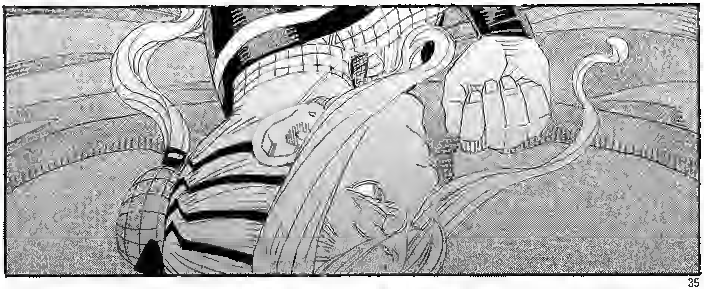
!?
ああああ
32
The bouquet!!
ドヤッ

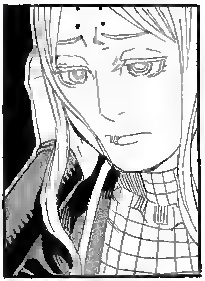


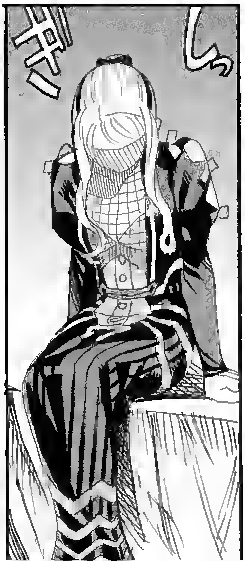


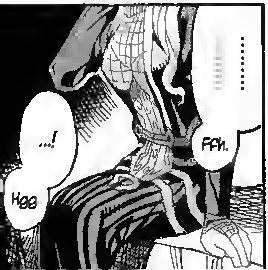
34
What's wrong?
Gaw?
That or,
Looks lolk her interface ain't connected.
Maybe she took a piddle.
Or she's sleeping off her fatigue
A lot happened.
She could be crying by herself.
.....


Huh?
What happened to that little avatar-capturing bitch?
Dunno
Wanker seems to have footed it.





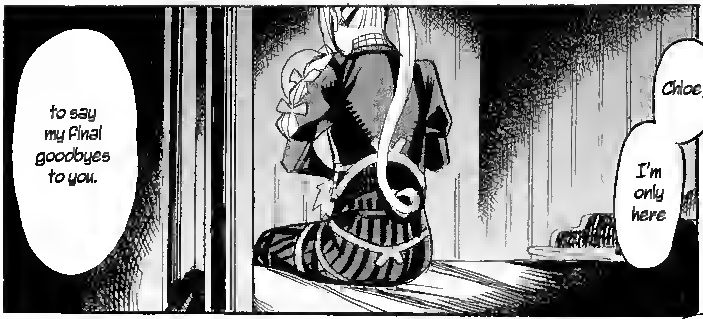


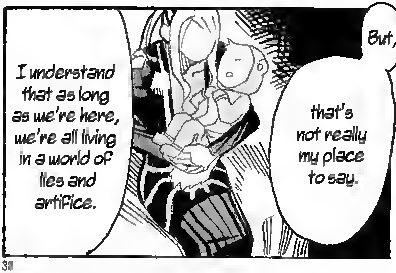

.....
Fffn.
...!
Hee

Gng!
Aaaah!
Hic,
Ahah!
Hugg!
aah,
Aahaha-
aaaa..
...!
Ahh,
Hgg.
Snff.
...hsh!
Unnn.
Aaaaaa!
Nnn.
Aaaahh,
Ghee!
Huh,
Hahh
Phhu.
Are
you crying,
Chloe?

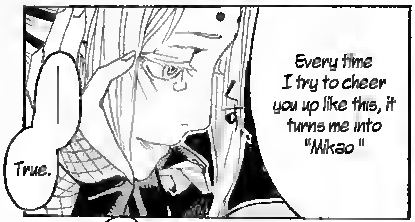
Mikao...
?
.....

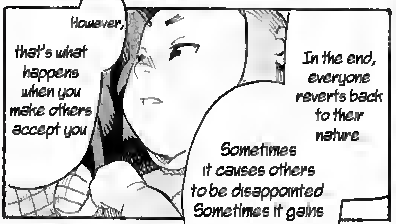
More importantly, I'm sorry I couldn't get in touch.
I should be the one apologizing
It's my fault
I don't...
I'm sorry, I'm sorry.
Mikao, I...
It's all right
Don't blame yourself.
I'm using Momo to speak with you right now
Surprised?
I lost my character
I'm sorry
ぎゅ


Chloe,
I'm only here
to say my final goodbyes to you.

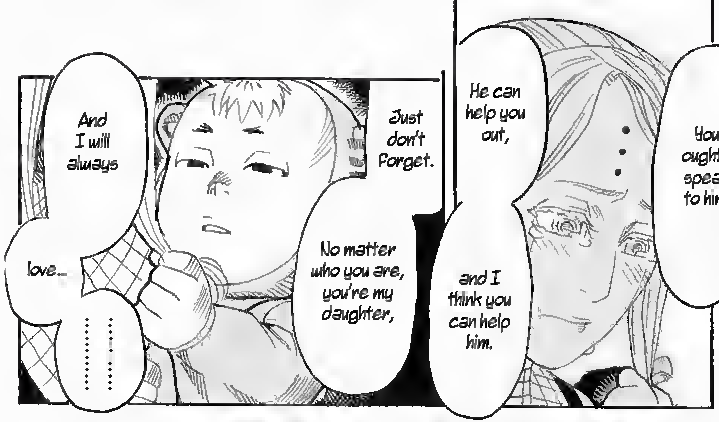

But,
that's not really my place to say.
I understand that as long as we're here, we're all living in a world of lies and artifice.

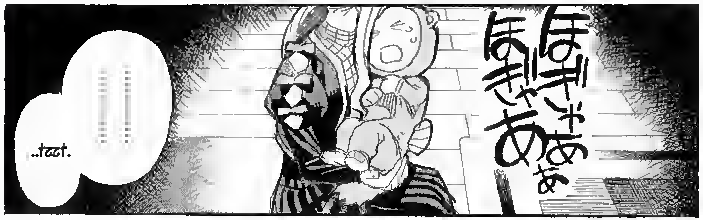
It's all right for you to be proud, to lead.
But I don't agree with the way you completely pretend to be a different person than yourself.
It means that you don't trust others.


Every time I try to cheer you up like this, it turns me into "Mikao"
True.

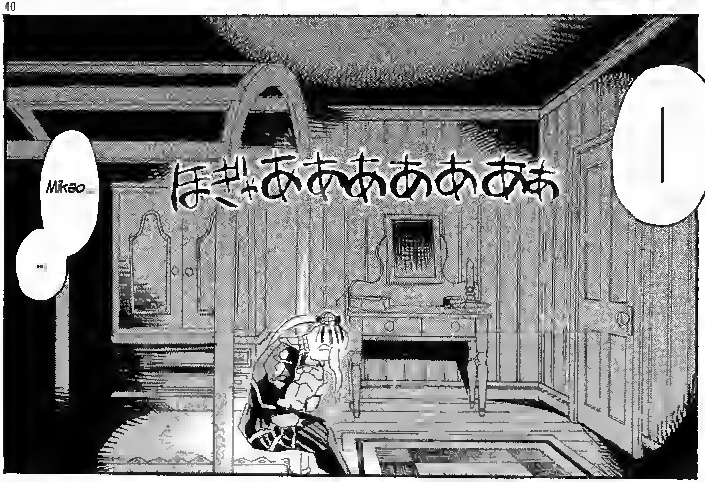

In the end, everyone reverts back to their nature
However, that's what happens when you make others accept you
Sometimes it causes others to be disappointed Sometimes it gains you trust.

So,
I hate to say it, but I'm relieved to see you crying.
It's okay for you to cry more than you do
I...
I was having a dream.
A dream of the past, about Lize being a crybaby
But,
at the same time, I knew it was just a dream.
And it,
it made me so sad.
I think you need someone you can tell everything. Someone you can trust to help you get it all off your chest...
It was nothing but a dream.
But,
she's not here anymore. She's nowhere.
TAPPA
That new bodyguard, the muscle-bound one.
I think he's a good guy


You ought'a speak to him.
...
He can help you out,
and I think you can help him.
Just don't forget.
No matter who you are, you're my daughter,
And I will always
love...
.....


ほぎゃあああ
ほぎゃあ
...tzzt.

40


ほぎゃあああああああ
Mikao...
...
—

ナツノクモ ③

spinning web

THE END

Like the story? Want to know what happens next? Translators are needed for chapter 19 and onwards.

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